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**Gunboat Diplomacy in a New World Order:  
Strategic Considerations for U.S. Naval Intervention  
in the Twenty-First Century**

by

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"Once, I remember, we came upon a man-of-war anchored off the coast. There wasn't even a shed there, and she was shelling the bush. Her ensign dropped limp like a rag; the muzzles of long six-inch guns stuck out all over the low hull; the greasy, slimy swell swung her up lazily and let her down, swaying her thin masts. In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech--and nothing happened. Nothing could happen."

--Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

"The best Ambassador is a Man-of War."

--Oliver Cromwell





# **Gunboat Diplomacy in a New World Order: Strategic Considerations for U.S. Naval Intervention in the Twenty-First Century**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact, the threat of global war has all but been eliminated. At the same time, the Third World is experiencing a rising tide of instability, brought about by economic and social inequities, religious fundamentalism, and resurgent ethnic and political rivalries--and fuelled by increasing military capabilities caused by the proliferation of advanced-technology weapons. As a result of these changes, U.S. security strategy is turning from its Cold War focus on global containment to the protection of U.S. interests against regional instabilities.

The most dramatic confirmation of this change in direction was the announcement by the President on 2 August 1990 of a new National Security Strategy which would focus on maintaining stability and responding to regional crises, rather than on preparing for a global conflict against the Soviet Union. This strategy was to be based on four elements--deterrence, forward presence, crisis response, and reconstitution of forces--and predicated on the assumption that there would be adequate warning of Soviet recidivism to allow for the restructuring of a globally-capable U.S. military force. Barring a return to Cold War status between the two major



powers, the principle threat to future U.S. interests was determined to lie in regional instabilities throughout the world.

One of the most far-reaching effects of this realignment of U.S. security strategy is the potential it holds for altering U.S. involvement in the Third World. Where the U.S. once judged political events in the Third World as they related to the broader context of U.S.-Soviet relations, that no longer needs to be a principal determinant for U.S. policy. Freed of the strategic necessity to view every regional crisis as an emerging East-West battleground, the United States now has the freedom to make realistic judgments about the importance of Third World events to the vital interests of the nation.

In determining priorities for a potential use of U.S. military force in the future, several questions may now be addressed which have heretofore been overshadowed by larger strategic considerations. In which areas of the world do U. S. interests truly lie? When should U.S. forces be sent to protect those interests? In which crises and with what urgency must U.S. forces be prepared to intervene, and how much "stability" should they be prepared to impose? Most important, does every world conflict or crisis require a military response from the United States? Is stability everywhere always in the national interest? Is instability anywhere always detrimental to the national interest?

Independent of improvements in East-West relations, the changes in the world political structure demand that the United States reevaluate its relationship to the Third World. The recent invasion of Kuwait by Iraq--and the unprecedented military coalition which it sparked--has altered the strategic landscape no less radically than the dissolution of the Soviet empire. In a world in which a single "Third World" nation can threaten





control over strategic resources, in which virtually every nation has the opportunity to acquire the world's most advanced military hardware, and in which defense coalitions cross cultural, economic, religious, and political lines, the most important question, from a political and military standpoint, may be whether there is still such a thing as a "Third World" nation?

For the U. S. Navy these are questions of no small consequence. As the vanguard of U. S. presence overseas, and the most visible symbol of U. S. commitment to its international responsibilities, the Navy operates daily at the fringes of the Third World. To misjudge the nature of "the threat" in a regional crisis, or to miscalculate the means required to counter it, is to endanger a ship and its crew. Worse yet, miscalculation can result in the sort of action (or inaction) which would seriously prejudice the vital interests of the nation.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has dispatched the Navy to respond to more than 192 crises worldwide<sup>1</sup>. Yet with forty years of experience in dealing with regional conflicts, the Navy appears to have conducted very little structured analysis to determine whether those operations were correctly executed, or the degree to which they actually

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<sup>1</sup>Figures vary depending on the source of the information. Adam B. Siegel, U. S. Navy Crisis Response Activity, 1946-1989 (Preliminary Report) (Alexandria: Center for Naval Analysis, 1989) lists 187 incidents. In contrast, Blechman and Kaplan, Force Without War: U. S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington, D. C. : Brookings Institution, 1978), count 215 incidents between 1946 and 1975, of which the Navy participated in 177. Official Navy sources cite 202 instances of naval participation in incidents excluding the Korean and Vietnam wars. For purposes of this study the results of the Siegel inventory are considered the standard. This includes the original figure of 187, plus 5 additional events which have occurred since that study was published.



served the broader interests of the nation.<sup>2</sup> Still less often has there been any attempt to lay out a strategy for the use of limited naval power overseas, or to define what should be achieved in doing so.

Understanding these issues is central to determining how the Navy can best be used in the future to protect the nation's interests. If intervention in regional crises is the most likely mission for the future, (as it has been in the past) how do naval forces best serve to stabilize a crisis? Conversely, where and when might naval forces be expected to incur unacceptable risks (meaning, in the broad context, risks to the national interests, and not just to the naval units themselves) which therefore dictate that alternatives to naval intervention be sought? In the "new world order" these questions have pivotal significance for two reasons.

First, the most recent revision of the National Security Strategy of the United States, designates "crisis response" as a strategic priority on a level with conventional and nuclear deterrence.<sup>3</sup> This has made possible a refocussing of the Navy's strategic planning from its traditional naval missions of the Cold War--anti-submarine warfare and sea-launched strikes against the navy and land-based targets of the Soviet Union--to forward presence in the littoral regions of the world, and crisis response in regional

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<sup>2</sup>The exceptions seem to be formal investigations into incidents which result in a loss of life, damage to a vessel, or substantial adverse publicity. Examples include the Department of Defense investigations, Formal Investigation into the Downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by USS VINCENNES (CG-49), and the Report of the DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, (Long Commission Report).

<sup>3</sup>The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990). The draft version of the 1991 National Security Strategy replaces "force projection" with "crisis response," in accordance with the terminology spelled out in President Bush's Aspen Speech.





conflicts. This change in national priorities means that naval intervention in regional conflicts (i.e. "gunboat diplomacy," to use the more traditional term) will be the most likely mission for the future, and the central issue for future naval strategy and force structure planning.

Secondly, the integration of naval presence and crisis intervention into the security strategy of the United States needs to be reevaluated because of other, significant changes in the world order, notably: (1) the proliferation of technologically sophisticated weapons systems which enables even relatively weak coastal nations to challenge the impunity of naval vessels; and (2) the growing political sophistication and diversity of national interests among regional powers which means that a warship, or even a naval task force, simply does not carry the same degree of political weight (or is not accorded the same "respect") that it once was.

As a consequence, one of the most important issues for U.S. naval strategy in the contemporary world is to define the political limits of naval presence and crisis response, and determine how naval intervention--"gunboat diplomacy"--should be used in the current geostrategic climate to best support the national interests.

Failure to address these issues, or to adequately account for the significant changes in the world's political environment, would constitute the classic strategic mistake--that is, preparing to fight the last war. The "last war" in this case would not, however, be the one the U.S. Navy planned to fight but never did--namely, a global war against the Soviet Union--but rather, the ones the Navy actually *did fight*: the series of Third World conflicts and regional interventions to which the Navy responded during the Cold War years. Without due regard for the changing U.S. relationship with the Third World--and a serious critique of recent U. S. experiences in dealing



with Third World crises--the Navy's new strategy is no more certain to be the correct one than if the nation continued to employ a Maritime Strategy designed to counter a monolithic Soviet threat.

The past decade offers numerous examples of U. S. intervention in regional instabilities and crises which achieved varying degrees of success. Many of these provide important lessons for the future in how and when to use naval forces, and what the risks are to the national interest if a given mission fails to achieve its military or political objectives.

This study is an examination of United States naval strategy and its evolving focus on crisis intervention, and how recent uses of U.S. naval force illustrate a need for a reevaluation of naval intervention and its implementation in a "new world order." To this end, three specific uses of U. S. naval power in the last decade are instructive--the U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1982, the 1986 air strike on Tripoli, Libya; and the Persian Gulf tanker escort operation of 1987-1988.

It should be noted that the term "naval strategy" is used throughout this study to mean the naval element of U.S. security strategy of the U.S. Navy. The term "Maritime Strategy" identifies the 1986 Maritime Strategy issued by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and its derivatives and later revisions. The distinction between naval and maritime strategy has been clarified by Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett:

*"Maritime strategy* refers to the purposeful exercise of the sea-using national assets of all kinds for the political goals set by government. *Naval strategy* refers more narrowly





to the purposeful exercise of naval forces, again for the political goals set by government."<sup>4</sup>

## II. DESIGNING A NEW NAVAL STRATEGY

### Strategic Considerations for a New Era

"What we require now is a defense policy that adapts to the significant changes we are witnessing -- without neglecting the enfuring realities that will continue to shape our security strategy. A policy of peacetime engagement every bit as constant and committed to the defense of our interests and ideals in today's world as in the time of conflict and Cold War."

--President George Bush, 2 August 1991

In the last two years, the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy has undergone a revolution which has dramatically reshaped its Cold War orientation. Originally issued as the maritime component of the National Military Strategy (NSDD-32 of 20 May 1982), the Maritime Strategy was published in 1986 as an unclassified supplement to the Naval Institute Proceedings. The specific intention of that document was to define the global

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<sup>4</sup>Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett, eds., Seapower and Strategy (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1989), 378.



use of naval forces from peacetime through global war to war termination.<sup>5</sup> It specifically identified the Soviet Union as the principal threat to world peace and to U.S. national interests, and sought to lay out general principles for the deterrence of Soviet aggression, and a strategy for war-fighting should that deterrent capability prove insufficient.<sup>6</sup>

The original Maritime Strategy served three purposes. First, it identified the nature of the principle threat to U. S. security and explained how the U. S. Navy would be used to counter that threat. This provided internal direction for the Navy's strategic planning and training effort in order to successfully prepare for a global conventional or nuclear war. Secondly, the Maritime Strategy established some method for determining the size and composition of forces required to carry out that mission, and ostensibly provided a justification to the Congress for the 600-ship fleet proposed by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman. Third, it addressed in general terms how the Navy would be used to prosecute a global war against the only globally-capable adversary, the Soviet Union. Those principles of deterrence and war-fighting are still considered valid in the unlikely event that the U.S. is required to respond to a resurgent Soviet Union or some other global threat to U.S. security.

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<sup>5</sup>Admiral James D. Watkins, USN, "The Maritime Strategy," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, (supplementary issue) (January 1986): 4. References to the Maritime Strategy in this paper are to this document. For a summary of the evolution of the Navy's Maritime Strategy see Captain Peter M. Schwartz, USN "The Maritime Strategy in Review," in Naval Institute Proceedings, (February 1987): 113; and John B. Hattendorf, "The Evolution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy, 1977-1986," Naval War College Review (Summer 1988): 7.

<sup>6</sup>Linton F. Brooks, "Naval Power and National Security: The Case for the Maritime Strategy," International Security 11 (Fall 1986): 61.





With the dramatic changes of the last several years, however, the underlying assumptions of the Maritime Strategy no longer reflect the world political realities for the broad spectrum of naval operations. The diminishing threat posed by the Soviet Union has greatly reduced the likelihood of global war and, consequently, the requirement for the United States to maintain the forces needed to respond immediately to a threat of that magnitude. At the same time, however, the aggregate dangers to national and world security have shown no indication of diminishing. Numerous points of friction between nations, nationalities, ethnic sects, and economies, coupled with the evaporation of the stabilizing influence of a common adversary, have increased the likelihood of an imbalance in the world's political equilibrium. Adding to this imbalance is the proliferation of technologically advanced weapons systems which enable even the smallest nations (or politically-motivated organizations or terrorist groups) to exert a disproportionate influence on regional balances of power, and to threaten the security of stronger nations or the freedom of navigation on the high seas.

In a world characterized more by uncertainty than anything else, there has been great deal of effort expended to define the premises upon which a reliable strategy could be based. One recent monograph cites twelve specific studies over the last three years which have been devoted exclusively to determining how the Navy should direct its predictably declining resources to account for the changed geostrategic environment and the future threat.<sup>7</sup> One such effort by the Center for Strategic and

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<sup>7</sup>Scott C. Truver, Tomorrow's Fleet: a Question of Strategic Advantage Lost. (Cherry Hill, NJ: Information Spectrum Inc., 1990), 11.



International Studies derives seven characteristics which are considered fundamentally sound predictions about the evolving geopolitical environment:

- (1) A reduced risk of general nuclear war;
- (2) A perception of the Soviets as more of a regional power (even if possessing nuclear weapons);
- (3) Increased diversity in the range of potential threats to U.S. security;
- (4) An increased influence of domestic politics on U. S. national security decision-making, with fewer economic resources available for national security;
- (5) A projected decline in America's ability to shape the course of international events, especially in the economic sphere;
- (6) A more selective use and smaller-scale application of U. S. military force in localized conflicts (driven, in part, by a reduced U. S. intent to become involved overseas;
- (7) An increasingly regional focus for all countries.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of such changes in the world political situation, the Navy began nearly two years ago to conduct a reappraisal of the Maritime Strategy. In a 30 December 1989 "White Paper" entitled "The Necessity for Naval Power in the 1990s" the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Carlisle Trost, laid out a number of principles central to the reevaluation of the nation's naval strategy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Schlesinger, James R. and Douglas M. Johnston, Project Directors, An Introductory Study on The Role of Maritime Power in an Uncertain World (Washington: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1990) iv.

<sup>9</sup>Admiral C. H. Trost, USN, "The Necessity for Naval Power in the 1990s," 30 December 1989. Open distribution copy of CNO (OP-00K) Memorandum. Quotations cited are from pages 3-6 of the 11-page document.



(1) Responding to crises is a traditional naval mission. Naval forces enjoyed particular advantages which made them ideal for responding to crisis situations. These include a "calculated ambiguity" which complicates the defensive considerations of opposing parties, while not committing the United States irrevocably to a particular course of action; flexibility of action, diversity of capability, and immediacy of resources, which serve to maximize the options available to policy-makers; and political flexibility which enables them to be removed from a location without the adverse political repercussions which attend a retreat or re-stationing of land-based forces.

(2) The Soviet Union is preoccupied with internal reform and appears genuinely committed to a peaceful and friendly relationship with the United States. Underpinning the optimistic tone of this statement is, however, the recognition that "the Soviet Union, because of her geostrategic dominance of the Eurasian land mass and latent military power, will remain a power with which to reckon."

(3) The most likely military situation is "low intensity conflict." Rising populations, nationalist movements, religious zealotry and the struggle for control of crucial resources fuel regional wars and antagonisms. According to the 1988 National Security Strategy and the 1989 Report of the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy<sup>10</sup>, regional instabilities and conflicts involving fundamental

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<sup>10</sup>Cited in the CNO White Paper, p. 5.





American interests are the highest probability areas for U. S. military involvement.

(4) Developing countries are armed with "First World" weapons which "continue to add a most difficult and dangerous dimension to the missions of peacekeeping and conflict containment."

(5) The Navy in existence is the minimum force necessary to maintain U. S. commitments. This included the maintenance of regional stability in critical areas of the world, effective participation in anti-narcotics operations, and responding to day-in, day-out national requirements. A reduction in forces could only be compensated by extending the length of overseas deployments beyond the practical limit gauged to permit retention of personnel and provide for upkeep of the fleet.

The fundamental defense issue, according to this document, was to "maintain a military posture that presents a credible deterrent vis-a-vis the Soviet Union while also protecting U. S. interests and those of allies from a diversity of regional threats."<sup>11</sup> The strategic deterrent provided by ballistic missile and attack submarines would remain a paramount function of the Navy under any conditions. To neglect the threat posed by a nuclear-capable adversary--of whatever nationality--would be to fall prey to the "maximum likelihood fallacy:" concentrating attention on the most likely

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 6.



types of conflict while ignoring the most dangerous threats.<sup>12</sup> Such a mistake would be strategically negligent.

Nevertheless, the significant change which this paper makes clear is the shift in focus from the Soviet Union to regional instability and low-intensity conflict as the most probable threat to national interests, and the most likely arena for naval operations in the future.

### **The 1990 National Security Strategy**

Such a shift in strategic focus was officially addressed in the 1990 National Security Strategy, and was reflected in a revision to the Maritime Strategy issued two months later. The National Security Strategy established four principle missions for the military:

(1) Deterrence: persuading potential adversaries that the costs of aggression, either nuclear or conventional, would exceed any conceivable gain.

(2) Strong Alliances: collective defense arrangements which allow for the combination of economic and military strengths, thus lessening the burden on any one country.

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<sup>12</sup>Ronald W. Jenkins, Coalition Defense versus Maritime Strategy: A Critical Examination Illustrating a New Approach to Geopolitical Analysis. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 103. See also Geoffrey Till, Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 214.





(3) Forward Defense: defense of shared values and common interests requires the forward presence of significant American military forces to provide the capability for early, direct defense against aggression and serve as a visible reminder of U. S. commitment to the common effort.

(4) Force Projection: global security interests dictate the maintenance of ready forces and the means to move them to reinforce units forward deployed or to project power into areas where the U. S. has no permanent presence.<sup>13</sup>

The first three of these missions, deterrence, coalitions with allies, and forward defense formed the three pillars of both the National Security Strategy and the Maritime Strategy from the earlier Cold War era. According to the 1986 Maritime Strategy, operations of a lesser intensity than global war, such as routine peacetime operations and crisis management, were considered essential elements of stability maintenance, but were not the major objectives of the strategy:

"Preparation for global war is the critical element in ensuring deterrence, but our peacetime operations and response in time of crisis are also crucial contributions to deterrence and stability. Therefore, while the peacetime presence and crisis response components of our Maritime Strategy are less detailed and formal than the warfighting component, they are no less important. In fact the volatility of today's international situation suggests that we must expect to employ these

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<sup>13</sup>The National Security Strategy of the United States, 23.



elements of our Maritime Strategy in an expanding set of the world's trouble spots."<sup>14</sup>

The 1990 update to the Maritime Strategy recognized, however, that low-intensity conflict posed a separate and distinct danger to national security which required a "broadening of the national strategic focus."<sup>15</sup> The catalyst for this redirection of strategic thinking was the proliferation of technologically advanced weapons which have served to provide virtually every nation in the world with the capability to effect regional politics, and to threaten the freedom of the seas of even major world maritime powers. By the end of the 1980s, the export and sale of Western defense technologies had created a threat to regional security which was unrelated to East-West competition, and not subject to superpower influence. As Admiral Trost noted:

"With or without superpower involvement, low-intensity conflicts will be increasingly violent and involve high technology. The proliferation of sophisticated weapons worldwide means that the types of naval forces designed to prevail in the most technically sophisticated and modern threat environment, exemplified by Soviet capabilities, are increasingly the same types of naval forces required to fight

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<sup>14</sup>Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," 5. Elsewhere Admiral Watkins acknowledges that "seapower is relevant across the spectrum of conflict, from routine operations in peacetime to the provision of the most survivable component of our forces for deterring strategic nuclear war." (p. 7.)

Notwithstanding this acknowledgement of the broader applicability of the Maritime Strategy, the Navy, as Linton Brooks noted, "devoted most of its attention to those aspects of the strategy dealing with global conventional war." (Brooks, p. 64).

<sup>15</sup>Admiral Carlisle A. H. Trost, "Maritime Strategy for the 1990s," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings (May 1990): 92.



anyone else. The main difference is in the number of ships and aircraft that must be brought to bear, rather than their individual combat capability."<sup>16</sup>

The basic assumption of the Maritime Strategy--that preparation for global war against the Soviet Union inherently prepared U. S. forces for any lesser conflict--amounted to a denial of any special war-fighting requirements for regional conflicts, and overlooked the historical record of U.S. overseas involvement. The specific focus of strategic planning was centered on the upper end of the spectrum of conflict--at global conventional and nuclear war--where the level of violence was most intense, but where the probability of occurrence was lowest.

The utility of naval forces for dealing with any particular point along the spectrum of conflict, from presence and crisis response to global conventional war, lay in their inherent mobility, rapid response, calculated ambiguity of purpose, and their demonstration of superior firepower and national commitment.<sup>17</sup> Those qualities have not been altered with changes in the geostrategic climate, and remain valid today.

In contrast to the earlier Cold War focus, however, the newer strategy emphasizes preparation for regional conflict independent of its relation to global war. Two characteristics of this change in strategic focus are significant. First, the shift in planning focus from the extreme end of the spectrum to the more volatile center recognizes the decline in East-West tensions, the frequent need to protect U. S. interests from threats below the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>17</sup>R. James Woolsey, "Planning a Navy: The Risks of Conventional Wisdom," in Steven E. Miller and Stephen Van Evera, eds., Naval Strategy and National Security, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 9.





threshold of general conventional war, and the fact that movement toward the right side of the spectrum has never progressed beyond regional confrontation. This last point reconciles a problem which the original Maritime Strategy never satisfactorily addressed--that there could be a conflict involving the Soviet Union at the sub-strategic or regional level which might not escalate to global war.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, the expanded attention at levels below general war--the domain of various degrees of low-intensity conflict--accords with the historical facts of life since the end of the Second World War. While the Navy's planning, training and preparations during the Cold War centered on deterrence and execution of global war, the Navy was actually responding to numerous regional conflicts worldwide.<sup>19</sup> The revised "Operational Continuum" therefore represents the reality of political uses of naval force since 1946, and not simply a hierarchy of the modes of conflict. In essence, this represents a truer picture of the world as it is than the earlier model, which was based on speculation and the perceived intent of the Soviet Union.

There is a second way in which this evolving strategy more accurately reflects reality. The principle rationale underlying the Maritime Strategy was its focus on countering the Soviet threat to U. S. interests, and more specifically to guaranteeing the security of the European NATO nations. As such, it has been argued, it was no maritime strategy at all, but rather the naval component of a continental strategy "designed to support campaigns in ground theaters of operations both directly and indirectly."<sup>20</sup> Within that

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<sup>18</sup>Brooks, Naval Power and National Security, 75.

<sup>19</sup>See note 1.

<sup>20</sup>Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," 4; cited in Strategy and a Future Navy, (page 12) a paper delivered by William S. Lind, President of the Military



continental strategy, force projection was the means to implement the strategic element of "horizontal escalation" against secondary targets of the Soviet Union in order to divide its battle front during a Central European war.<sup>21</sup>

Owing to its European focus, the Maritime Strategy paid little attention to the necessity for military intervention, or even of significant national interests, outside the context of East-West competition. Conflicts in the Third World transcended the interests of states directly involved only insofar as they served as back-drop for more potentially serious conflicts between major powers. Thus a "fundamental component of the nation's success in deterring war with the Soviet Union depends upon our ability to stabilize and control escalation in Third World crises."<sup>22</sup> But there was little intrinsic strategic value attributed to U.S. intervention in regional issues outside of the U.S.-Soviet context.

In contrast, the 1990 update to the Maritime Strategy differentiated more clearly between the wartime and peacetime uses of naval power:

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Reform Caucus, before the U. S. Naval Institute Conference on "Future U. S. Naval Power," San Diego, July 1988.

<sup>21</sup>The debate about this element of the Maritime Strategy was characterized early on by two articles appearing in Foreign Affairs: Robert W. Komer, "Maritime Strategy vs. Coalition Defense" 60 (Summer 1982) 1125; and Stansfield Turner and George Thibault, "Preparing for the Unexpected: The Need for a New Military Strategy" 61 (Fall 1982) 122. Other sources include John J. Mearsheimer, "A Strategic Misstep" in Miller and Van Evera, and Francis J. West, "The Maritime Strategy: The Next Step," Naval Institute Press, January 1987, 40.

<sup>22</sup>Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," 5.





"The objectives of the peacetime posture of the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps are to achieve deterrence, meet alliance and treaty commitments, support national diplomatic objectives, and to be ready for the rapid response essential to deal with any crisis."<sup>23</sup>

Achieving these objectives provided "regional stability while preserving U. S. economic and foreign policy interests."<sup>24</sup> As opposed to the original version, wherein "the more stable the international environment, the lower the probability that the Soviets will risk war with the West,"<sup>25</sup> this revision acknowledged that the preservation of international stability had intrinsic value for U. S. interests, independent of military and political competition between the United States and Soviet Union. Maintenance of stability required the ongoing commitment of the United States, which could be best demonstrated by the worldwide presence of U. S. naval forces.

While the 1986 Maritime Strategy provided a predominantly combat-oriented strategy for the protection of the European front and the defeat of a global adversary, the later revision to that strategy addressed the peaceful preservation of stability in the numerous unidentifiable arenas of U.S. strategic interest. Together, the Maritime Strategy and its later revision provided a naval strategy which more realistically addressed the full spectrum of naval operations from peace to global war.

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<sup>23</sup>Trost, "Maritime Strategy for the 1990s," 94.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>25</sup>Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," 8.



## **The Aspen Speech and the New National Security Strategy**

The final and most dramatic change to the U.S. naval strategy is the result of an address given by President Bush at the fortieth anniversary of the Aspen Institute in Aspen, Colorado<sup>26</sup>. Occurring on the very day that Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, this address was virtually overlooked by the press corps and received only minimal attention. Nevertheless, the principles laid out by the President provided a new direction for the nation's security strategy which would further direct the evolution of U.S. naval strategy toward a primary mission of naval intervention.

The President's remarks were based on several assumptions. First, the threat to U. S. and European security posed by the Soviet Union continued to wane, and the possibility of global or nuclear war was at a lower level than at any time in the previous forty years. As a consequence, the future threat to U. S. security would not come from a global power like the Soviet Union, but from an indeterminate number of militarily sophisticated regional powers which could upset the stability of international peace, commerce, and political and social development. Lastly, alliances would remain as essential to collective security and diplomatic relations as they had been during the Cold War. Nevertheless, the growing divergence of national interests would make alliances less certain than they had been in the past.

From these assumptions, it was clear that the strategic posture of the United States would be determined by a number of considerations:

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<sup>26</sup>George Bush, "Remarks to the Aspen Symposium," Aspen, Colorado.



(1) Enduring Soviet military capabilities would require that the United States continue to modernize its strategic deterrent triad of land-based and sea-based ICBMs and long-range bombers, and continue development of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

(2) Overall, however, U. S. military forces would become smaller in proportion to the reduced threat to U. S. and Allied security. A 25% reduction across the board was considered realistic.

(3) Forward presence of U. S. forces would continue to be a key element of the nation's defensive posture, and a visible display of U. S. engagement in international security problems.

(4) A military force capable of power projection to remote locations overseas would be required for the defense of U. S. interests and for responding to regional crises.

(5) Preservation of the nation's industrial base would be essential for reconstitution of armed forces if a global threat re-emerged, and to provide for continued, phased acquisition of technologically superior defense systems.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Following the President's speech in Aspen, this shift in defense policy began emerging from a number of other sources, most notable:

-Remarks by General Colin L. Powell, USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Baltimore, Maryland, 23 August 1990; and at the 72nd Annual National Convention of the American Legion, Indianapolis, Indiana, 30 August 1990;

-Remarks delivered by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Hot Springs, Virginia, 6 September 1990;

- Speech by LtGen Butler, Director of the Strategic Planning Division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the National Press Club, Washington, D. C., 27 September 1990. (Sources cited are from DOD-circulated copies of these addresses.)





Like the assumptions of the CSIS study cited earlier (note 12), these observations represented a best estimate of the future security environment of the United States. Unlike the CSIS study, however, the President's statements were more than observations about the changing world. Rather, they directed a radical reshaping of the nation's security strategy, based on four foundations: deterrence, forward presence, crisis response, and force reconstitution.

This divergence from the earlier Maritime Strategy has immediate implications for naval operations and for the acquisition and design of naval forces, as well, centering on the development of capabilities for the projection of force in Third World and regional conflicts. Such a shift in focus was already fundamental to the CNO White Paper, with its reference to crisis response as a "traditional naval mission;" the concern expressed about the enhanced capabilities of Third World weapons systems (including the threats posed by mines and diesel submarines); and the power-projection capabilities inherent in carrier-based aviation, Marine Corps amphibious assault teams and the Combat Logistics Force. The significance of the Aspen Speech is that it established a new direction for strategic planning.

There is, however, another issue raised by the security structure proposed in the President's address--that of a substantial cut in defense spending. A determining factor in the evolution of the nation's future defenses is the anticipated reduction in the budget. Under the plan proposed by President Bush--and subsequently adopted by the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Chief of Naval Operations--there will be a reduction in military force structure of 25% across the board, targetted for implementation in 1995. Current projections estimate a



reduction in the size of the Navy from 536 vessels to 450.<sup>28</sup> The implications of such a decrease for naval operations and fleet size for the future are substantial.

For the modern Navy, the responsibility to respond to changes in global politics, a redefined national strategy, and a restrictive budget far transcends the routine difficulties experienced in managing a Navy of--as the saying goes--"thirty-year ships built under a five-year plan by the direction of a two-year Congress with the assistance of three-year officers using a one-year budget." The extra-ordinary expense associated with fleet construction, and the increasing complexity of warships (and the extensive training required for their crews) makes rapid response to a change in strategy or economics difficult to accommodate. Moreover, the frequency with which the Navy has been called upon to protect the nation's interests during the last forty-five years, cautions against a radical or unstudied reduction of forces.

This has been demonstrated no more clearly than during the last decade when the Navy was involved in 52 specific instances of maritime interdiction, shows of force, political demonstration, or humanitarian assistance, only one of which involved direct confrontation with forces of the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> According to the Chief of Naval Operations, the Navy's

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<sup>28</sup>Michael Gordon, "Pentagon Drafts New Battle Plan," New York Times, 2 August 1990, A1.

<sup>29</sup>Based on the Adam B. Siegel inventory (note 1), there were 47 instances during the 1980s (up to a closure date of 1 August 1989) which involved U. S. Naval forces. John F. Morton, "The U. S. Navy in 1989," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, (May 1990): 166, adds five additional instances during the remainder of the year. The single "confrontation" involving naval forces of the United States and those of the Soviet Union was the September 1983 search for the missing airliner KAL 007.



operating tempo was 20% higher in 1986 than it had been during the Vietnam War, even though the U. S. was involved in no formal conflict.<sup>30</sup>

Based on such a projected tempo of operations, it is easy to see that a substantial reduction in the size of the Navy must inevitably force the United States to reduce its overseas commitments and choose between competing requirements--even if the Soviet Union unilaterally withdraws from the competition for naval supremacy and leaves the United States as the only naval superpower. It is not conceivable that a Navy of 400-450 ships will be able to support the operating tempo of the 1980s when the fleet averaged 560 vessels.

The challenge for the Navy lies in devising a strategy which does more than simply appease the grail quest for a "peace dividend". The real need is to review the entire range of naval forces, preserve and enhance the essential mission capabilities, and eliminate or reprioritize those which do not contribute directly to the security of U. S. vital interests. As the President noted in the Aspen Speech,

"The United States would be ill-served by forces that represent nothing more than a scaled-back or shrunken-down version of the ones we possess at present. If we simply prorate our reductions--cut equally across the board--we could easily end up with more than we need for contingencies that are no longer likely--and less than we must have to meet

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<sup>30</sup> Trost, "The Maritime Strategy," *op cit*, page 5. Competing against the 52 operational missions cited above have been the routine cycle of mandated inspections, essential maintenance and overhaul periods, and annual U. S. and Allied training exercises (over 300 in fiscal year 1989), which have grown more intense in recent years despite the frequent operational taskings.





emerging challenges. What we need are not merely reductions, but restructuring."<sup>31</sup>

Even relatively minor "restructuring," however, promises to have far-reaching consequences for some long-established naval priorities, particularly in acquisition.<sup>32</sup> As might be expected, there has been a certain amount of institutional paranoia at the prospect that the Navy, like the other services, will have to "build down" to accommodate the reevaluation of U. S. security strategy. As Norman Friedman observed, "to adopt an explicit strategy implies a process of choice; such choice creates winners--and losers --in a bureaucracy, both in kinds of forces supported and in kinds of technology purchased."<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the reevaluation of naval strategy is not "merely" an issue of responding to the changes in the world's political alignments. It is a necessity brought on by an identifiable reduction in the force structure, which is likely to preclude the same type of vigorous naval presence that characterized U.S. naval operations in the 1980s. This is merely one more--though perhaps the most immovable--reason why the U.S. maritime strategy is undergoing a revolution. The important issue is to identify the foundations for a naval strategy which can meet the nation's needs in a "new

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<sup>31</sup>The Aspen Speech, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup>For example, the emphasis which the 1990 National Security Strategy places on conventional deterrence, forward presence, and force projection capabilities is viewed by many as justifying the need for some forces (V-22 Osprey, DDG-51, and A-12 replacement) while undermining the relative importance of other new weapon systems (SSN-21 and the P-7 aircraft) which had earlier been critical to the top-level naval priorities of strategic deterrence and anti-submarine warfare.

<sup>33</sup>Norman Friedman, The U.S. Maritime Strategy (London: Jane's Publishing Co., Ltd. 1988) 14.



world order," and avoid, to the greatest degree possible, having the strategy imposed by budget restrictions.

### **A Naval Strategy for the 21st Century**

From the geopolitical changes of the last several years and the foundation established by President Bush at Aspen, Colorado, a new naval strategy is emerging which looks beyond the Cold War orientation of the past forty-five years. This new strategy is shaped by the three principal influences which are defining the current state of U.S. security strategy: (1) the reduced likelihood of conflict between the United States and Soviet Union; (2) the increasing necessity to maintain world stability and protect U.S. interests from regional threats; and (3) the certain decline in force structure and operations due to budgetary limitations and competing domestic priorities. In recent testimony before Congress<sup>34</sup>, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Frank B. Kelso, described a new naval strategy comprised of the following elements:

- Preservation of the SSBN and SSN force as the most secure leg of the nation's strategic triad.
- Continued emphasis on forward presence to reassure allies, deter aggression, and provide a base for rapid crisis response.

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<sup>34</sup>Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, 21 February 1991. From a transcript released by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and House Armed Services Committee.



- An orientation toward maintaining global stability, and responding to regional crises, rather than containing Soviet expansion.
- Maritime superiority to ensure unrestricted access for trade, and to provide a means to project power and control use of the seallanes.
- Reconstitution of a larger fleet as a basis for deterring or combating a global adversary. For the Navy this capability is predicated on an active industrial base and research and development effort.
- Continued reliance on coalitions and alliances to expand the power available and share responsibilities for military operations.
- An emphasis on naval operations as one element in broader joint military campaigns with the U.S. Army and Air Force.
- The acknowledgement that power projection ashore, supported by sea control in any naval operating area (particularly in littoral waters) will be a priority for future naval operations.<sup>35</sup>

The "bottom line" requirement to support these missions in the current strategic climate is a fleet of 450 ships. Even so, the smaller force would have a predictable effect on the Navy's ability to operate in the accustomed patterns. Future operations would require substantial variation in the size of aircraft carrier battlegroups and Marine Amphibious Ready Groups, depending upon their assigned missions, region of deployment, and the potential threat. Forces would be required to surge from one theater of operations to another if a crisis arose. And there would be an increased need to develop and deploy advanced weapons systems (Aegis air defense,

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<sup>35</sup>In contrast to the earlier Maritime Strategy, sea control is now considered a prerequisite for power projection and other naval operations, and not a strategic objective of itself. See discussion in Till, p. 192.





TOMAHAWK cruise missiles, improved ASW sensors) in order to provide an indigenous strike and self-protection capability for naval forces which would deploy in fewer numbers.

Notwithstanding such tactical accommodations, there would be identifiable risks associated with such a smaller Navy. First is the obvious limitation on the Navy's ability to adequately cover all the missions which have been required of it in the recent past. Eliminating the least essential of those requirements would reduce U.S. participation in annual allied and combined-navy exercises, and probably limit overseas naval presence in areas which had been routinely visited (such as the Indian Ocean, which is now projected to receive a deploying carrier battlegroup only six months out of the year). Furthermore, the response time to emerging crises would lengthen as naval task forces were surged from other theaters of operation, or while they made long transits from other areas. Further restrictions would exist on the Navy's ability to respond to simultaneous crises, such as the recent emergency evacuations of U.S. and foreign civilians from both Monrovia, Liberia, and Mogadishu, Somalia, during the build-up for Operation DESERT SHIELD.

The significance of the CNO's testimony, and of the manner in which the new naval strategy is presented, is that it does not focus on requirements to sustain deterrence and war-fighting capabilities against the Soviet Union (save those associated with strategic nuclear deterrence and reconstitution).<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the Maritime Strategy, all of the war-

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<sup>36</sup>Admiral Kelso emphasized frequently that U.S. military forces should be gauged according to Soviet capabilities, and not their professed intentions. There is a growing body of evidence, however, that the Soviets may lack the military capabilities to pose a global threat, whatever their intentions. A



fighting requirements and all of the anticipated shortfalls resulting from the smaller force are explained in terms of how they effect traditional forward presence, power projection, and crisis response capabilities.

It is this redirection away from the Soviet threat--of the nation's need principally to keep a watchful eye on developments in Eastern Europe, on Soviet naval production rates, on their compliance with forthcoming arms control initiatives, and on their diplomatic efforts in the Third World and elsewhere--which gives the best indication of how far the current naval strategy has traversed from its earlier Cold War focus.

Faced with the prospect of being the world's only true "maritime superpower,"<sup>37</sup> the United States is now in a position similar to that of Great Britain at the turn of the century. What is not the same is the sort of world which the new geopolitical climate is nurturing: one which more and more recognizes autonomy as an inherent right of states, as--due largely to the efforts of the United States--nations are more and more finding it necessary to recognize democratic autonomy as an inherent right of their people, both as individuals and as citizens.

Protecting the national interests while maintaining world and regional stability in a "new world order" based on such principles is likely to prove a mission for the Navy which is every bit as demanding operationally

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recent example is a revealing series of articles in *The Washington Post* (November 18-21) detailing the social, ethnic and disciplinary problems which have plagued the Soviet Army and Navy for years, and which are now so pervasive that the Soviet military services seem on the verge of paralysis. <sup>37</sup>The CNO cited a remark of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell, that "The 'superpower shingle' hangs outside the door of only nation."



--and far more challenging politically--than preparing for global war against a well-defined and equivalently-armed adversary.

### III. CRISIS RESPONSE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

#### The Resurrection of Gunboat Diplomacy

"Maritime forces will assume an ever increasing role as we reduce our land-based forces under a CFE agreement. The need for modern, multi-role naval units will not diminish. Surface combatants are critical to providing carrier battle group flexibility and power projection capability. The ability to introduce U.S. power at a time and place of our choosing requires us to continue to maintain a robust amphibious warfare capability, sized to carry all levels of amphibious forces."

--General John Galvin, USA,  
Supreme Allied Commander, Europe<sup>38</sup>

This prediction illustrates a strategic paradox of the age we are entering: the mission for the nation's naval forces will increase at the same time that the threat of global war is diminishing. Indeed, as the U.S. and Soviet Union progress toward stabilizing arms control agreements, and ground-based military forces are redeployed within national boundaries,

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<sup>38</sup>Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 7 March 1991.





there will be a greater need for naval forces in order to preserve the capability to project U.S. power "at a time and place of our choosing "

One of the central problems of the evolving naval strategy will be the difficulty in defining some cohesive rationale against which to measure its success. By its nature, a strategy directed toward crisis response will most likely be gauged by the aggregate success of any number of unrelated incidents. This could prove to be a singular disadvantage when compared to the Maritime Strategy of the Cold War. During that period, every military venture was measured against a calculus of benefits and ills befalling the two principal chess players, the United States and the Soviet Union. Even a setback in U.S. policy as a result of a failed or partially successful use of military force could be mitigated somewhat by demonstrating that there had accrued no clearcut advantage for the Communist world either. In addition, great powers, as James Cable pointed out, can afford to absorb occasional losses and political humiliations which would be intolerable to the status and power of lesser nations.<sup>39</sup>

However, in the "new world order" that may not be so clearly the case. Lacking the broader perspective and dampening effect provided by the "zero sum game" of East-West competition, U.S. foreign policy--particularly that which involves the use of military force--will be subjected to scrutiny at every step, with particular incidents gauged according to their intrinsic value to U.S. interests. The immediate effect of this sort of scrutiny will be to increase greatly the care administrations take in determining U.S. interests prior to committing military forces to action. In this regard, a series of failures in the use of U.S. force, or even a perception of such a failure,

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<sup>39</sup>James Cable, Diplomacy at Sea. (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1985) 52.



could prove to be a crippling setback for an administration's foreign policy. But the broader effect could be to bring public discredit on any particular service which demonstrates an inability to achieve clearcut military victories, or which incurs repeated damage to itself and thus tarnishes the nation's image.

At a minimum, a consistent record of failure or of inadequate performance will tear down service morale and cohesiveness. At the worst, it can undercut a service's public image to the degree that its value to the nation is questioned. This was recognized by Samuel P. Huntington in an article written in 1954, as a danger peculiar to the naval services.<sup>40</sup>

Huntington argued that a nation's military services are comprised of three fundamental elements: a strategic concept--a description of how, when, and where the military service expects to protect the nation against some threat to its security; the human and material resources which are required by the service to implement its strategic concept, and are allocated to it by society; and lastly, an organizational structure by which the service manages its resources and implements its strategic concept effectively. If the service is unable to adequately articulate its strategy, or fails to properly and efficiently implement it, the society and its leadership will be unclear as to the role of the service, and uncertain as to the necessity of its existence. This will translate into apathy or hostility toward the claims made by the service upon the resources of the society:

"To secure these resources it is necessary for society to forego the alternative uses to which these resources might be

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<sup>40</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 80 (May 1954): 483.



put and to acquiesce in their allocation to the military service. This, the resources which a service is able to obtain in a democratic society are a function of the *public support* of that service. The service has the responsibility to develop this necessary support, and it can only do this if it possesses a strategic concept which clearly formulates its relationship to the national security.<sup>41</sup>

Not only must the military services be adept at articulating a realistic mission for themselves, they must be perceived as being able to successfully carry it out. The net effect for a military which is unclear about its own strategy, or ineffective in implementing it, is that its nation will stop paying its bills. This has never been more true than it is for the present circumstances.

Executing a national strategy founded on peacetime presence and crisis response will require that the Navy and Marine Corps continue their traditional missions as the U.S. military forces responsible for maintaining diplomatic representation overseas, and for responding initially to crises which endanger U.S. interests. But, even in regions where relations between the U.S. and foreign nations are good, U.S. deployed forces make a lucrative target for terrorist strikes by disaffected factions who oppose their own national governments, or who desire to demonstrate the vulnerability of U.S. military forces. Much of the political value in warship deployments is gained through the display of military technology and capability, but as many critics have noted, even heavily-armed warships are vulnerable to

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid, 483.





attack by hand-held weapons like RPGs or terrorist bombs when in ambiguous situations in enclosed waters, or when they are anchored or in port.<sup>42</sup>

The opportunity for U.S. Navy warships to find themselves in dangerous situations is likely to increase in the future. The impending cuts in the Federal budget and in defense expenditures, as well as manpower cuts resulting from arms control initiatives and from less favorable political support in many regions, will result in a scaling-back of U.S. foreign bases and ground-force deployments. The responsibility for U.S. military representation overseas will thus fall increasingly on the Navy and Marine Corps.

In times of crisis, naval forces, which are traditionally the first to arrive in a region of conflict (frequently even before the United States has decided to adopt a particular course of action) and the last to leave, will be exposed to the ambiguities of the opening phases of a crisis, and to the repercussion of any action which the U.S. government may take. Furthermore, the operational doctrines currently being touted by both the U.S. Air Force and the Army as a result of the experiences of Operation DESERT SHIELD, call for future military operations to be built around the rapid deployment of U.S. strike forces. Under such scenarios, the Army's 82nd Airborne Division or the Air Forces's long-range conventional bomber forces or tactical air squadrons--supported by in-flight refuelling services--would be sortied from U.S. bases to conduct retributive or compellent strikes against military targets which threatened regional stability or U.S. interests. This strategy is evolving rapidly under a proposed Unified Command Plan of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and would establish a Contingency Force

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<sup>42</sup>Norman Friedman, "The Rules of Engagement Issue," in Gueritz, et al, 35.



with principal responsibility for conducting this sort of mission in time of crisis.<sup>43</sup>

The adoption of this sort of strike-force concept for future crisis response would allow U.S. ground-based forces to venture forth from the safe haven of bases within the continental U.S. or in secure foreign locations, conduct their missions, and return, thus minimizing their exposure to defensive or terrorist forces, or to long-term retaliation during extended deployment to a theater of operations. Meanwhile, U.S. naval forces would continue to execute their missions in a more traditional fashion, establishing a visible presence in a troubled region from the inception of a crisis to well after its conclusion, maintaining open sealanes and skies, and generally standing at risk as the situation clarifies. While conducting routine stability operations, and certainly when reacting to a crisis, naval forces would be highly susceptible to both low-technology terrorist-type weapons and to the sophisticated military hardware which continues to be available on the open market.

Given these realities, it is essential that the utility and limits of naval presence and intervention be reassessed. A valuable starting point for understanding the employment of modern naval forces in low intensity conflict is the definition of "gunboat diplomacy" originated by James Cable:

"Gunboat diplomacy is the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an

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<sup>43</sup>See Michael Gordon, "Pentagon Drafts New Battle Plan," New York Times, 2 August 1990, A1, and Eliot Cohen, "The Pentagon 2010," The New Republic, 15 March 1991.



international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state."<sup>44</sup>

This definition emphasizes the limited application of force up to, but not including, naval operations in time of war. This conforms precisely to the current definition of low-intensity conflict which spans military operations "at a level below conventional war but above routine peaceful competition among states."<sup>45</sup>

The distinguishing characteristic of gunboat diplomacy, aside from the employment of warships, is its reliance on coercion. Cable emphasizes that coercion is implicit in virtually every aspect of international relations between benign diplomatic intercourse and the outright declaration of war. Nevertheless, coercive diplomacy differs from the routine transactions of statesmanship in its "resort to direct threats or even overt acts."<sup>46</sup> Gunboat diplomacy is a subspecies of coercive diplomacy distinguished by its use of naval forces to establish the relationship. This is obvious from comparing Cable's definition of the former with that of the latter:

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<sup>44</sup>James Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy: 1919-1979, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1981), 39.

<sup>45</sup>"Low-intensity conflict is political-military confrontation between contending states or groups at a level below conventional war but above routine peaceful competition among states. It involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies, and its manifestations range from subversion to the use of armed forces. It is waged by a variety of political, economic, international, and military instruments. These conflicts are often in the Third World, but can contain regional and global security implications." cited from Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (formerly JCS Pub 1).

<sup>46</sup>James Cable, Diplomacy at Sea (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1985), 4.





"Coercive diplomacy is a resort to specific threats or to injurious actions, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state."<sup>47</sup>

In Cable's scheme, gunboat diplomacy is coercive by definition. It is manifest in four forms each of which has specific characteristics: *definitive*, the objective of which is to create a *fait accompli*, requiring that an opposing state either acquiesce to an established condition or escalate to conflict; *purposeful*, by which such a level of damage is threatened or inflicted that a State would be compelled to comply; *catalytic*, in which a State is forced to adopt a desired course of action through the apparent consequences of some other indirect but related action; and *expressive*, by which a State acts to posture or demonstrate intent, or simply to provide a vent for popular sentiment.<sup>48</sup>

To be valid, coercive diplomacy must be more than a general threat to impose some disastrous penalty; it must imply some specific, immediate consequence for the target nation which is related to an immediate action or a particular dispute. Such broad claims as threatening nuclear (or conventional) annihilation are senseless because, as Cable points out, they are "the modern equivalent of threatening one's adversaries with the wrath of God."<sup>49</sup> There is even some empirical evidence that the threat of

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<sup>47</sup>Cable, Diplomacy at Sea, 18.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 16. Cable cites the Cuban Missile Crisis as the only example where "one government demonstrated belief in another's threat of nuclear war by a significant change in policy." Nevertheless, U.S. nuclear superiority provided no protection against the North Korean seizure of *USS Pueblo* a few years later. (Gunboat Diplomacy, 90).



annihilation, either stated or implied, has virtually no effect on diplomatic bargaining or coercion, but is viewed merely as an extreme form of posturing. In their study on the uses of military force, Blechman and Kaplan concluded that, even between the United States and the Soviet Union, the consequences of nuclear destruction were so out of balance with virtually any desired condition of diplomatic bargaining,

"that our data do not support a hypothesis that the strategic weapons balance between the United States and the USSR influences outcomes. No support was found for the thesis that positive outcomes would occur more often when the United States had the advantage over the Soviet Union in ratios of delivery vehicles and numbers of warheads."<sup>50</sup>

### **Political Constraints on Gunboat Diplomacy**

Numerous writers have maintained that gunboat diplomacy in any form is fading from the world scene. These include Hedley Bull ("the period we are now entering will be one in which opportunities for the diplomatic use of naval forces, at least for the great powers, will be severely circumscribed,"<sup>51</sup>); and Kenneth Booth, who Cable cites as stating that "there is no prospect of a revival of the sort of gunboat diplomacy which

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<sup>50</sup>Barry M. Blechman, and Stephen S. Kaplan. Force Without War: U. S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution, 1978), 132.

<sup>51</sup>Bull, 9.



characterized the age of imperialism in the last century."<sup>52</sup> Cable, himself, states that the mere existence of gunboat diplomacy is controversial.<sup>53</sup>

Bull, for example, considered the effective use of naval forces in support of national interests to broadly include supporting friends and clients, coercing enemies, neutralizing activities by other naval powers, exerting influence in politically ambiguous situations, or simply advertising a nation's seapower by 'showing the flag.' Nevertheless, he believed that "gunboat diplomacy"

"is not a good term for these uses of sea power, taken as a whole, because of its associations with one particular form of naval diplomacy--the coercion of weak states by strong ones for purposes such as the protection of their nationals or property--a form that has long been in decline."<sup>54</sup>

The frequent use of U.S. naval forces in the last decade argues against the claim that such activities are in decline. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how "the coercion of weak states by strong ones" necessarily prejudices the definition for some applications of naval power, since it is a relatively rare event that the navy of a weaker state successfully coerces a stronger one.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Bull's contention illustrates the

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<sup>52</sup>Ken Booth, Law, Force and Diplomacy at Sea, (London: George Allen and Unwin 1985), cited in James Cable, "Gunboat Diplomacy's Future", U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (August 1986): 38.

<sup>53</sup>Cable, Gunboat diplomacy, 175.

<sup>54</sup>Hedley Bull, "Sea Power and Political Influence," in Jonathan Alford, ed., Sea Power and Influence: Old Issues and New Challenges, (Osmon: Gower and Allanheld, 1980)

<sup>55</sup>Robert Mandel ("The Effectiveness of Gunboat Diplomacy," International Studies Quarterly 30 (Mar 86) 59) concludes that there is no necessary correlation between the power of the assailant nation over the victim, *except*





widely held view that "gunboat diplomacy" is an unacceptable term for modern international relations.

As Cable states, the nature of the international environment and its influence on coercive diplomacy is "a subject too vast and complex for brief discussion."<sup>56</sup> There are, however, several relevant observations to be made about the role and influence of the international community on U.S. perceptions of coercive diplomacy. First, the international community does have at its disposal several active resources for controlling coercive diplomacy among nations. Among them are military action, economic sanctions or trade restrictions, adverse diplomatic measures, such as censure by the United Nations, or simply loss of international political support or national prestige.<sup>57</sup>

In the case of the United States, however, its military power, economic strength, political vitality and customary (though varying) attention to coalition building, has meant that these restraints have rarely, if ever, been brought to bear against the United States. Thus, the international community has had little effective ability to shape or curb U.S. interventions through the active use of sanctions, even when U.S. actions were perceived as unjustified or illegal. The greatest influence which the international community has wielded has historically been over U.S. prestige

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"when the focus narrows from overall power to emphasis on military preparedness." (75) Cable draws a similar conclusion, but stresses a few notable exceptions, such as Israel's attack on the *USS Liberty* in 1967 ( "Gunboat Diplomacy's Future," U.S. Naval Institute Press, (August 1986): 38), and the 1968 seizure of *USS Pueblo* by North Korea (Gunboat Diplomacy, 56).

<sup>56</sup>Cable, Diplomacy at Sea, 42.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 43.



and diplomatic self-image. This can be a substantial restraint for a nation like the United States whose citizenry has strong emotional ties to the democratic tradition, and places great importance on the intrinsic value of consensus in political relations, even in the international sphere. As Cable observes, "sensitivity to international constraints tends to be proportional to the international involvement of the state concerned."<sup>58</sup>

There is one perspective from which this is readily apparent, and that is the earlier stated sensitivity to gunboat diplomacy's perceived roots in imperialism, and U.S. sensitivities to this perception. This attitude was still prevalent as late as 1972, as typified by one analysis of the political effect of naval coercion on Third World nations:

"The peoples of the Third World in particular do not count on long-term developments. They think in terms of today, and of what they can see. They are perhaps unable to distinguish true seapower from maritime power. Thus, demonstratively displayed presence, coupled with propaganda and expansionist policies, is often honored politically to a higher degree than its real worth justifies."<sup>59</sup>

According to the popular conception, gunboat diplomacy is, as Cable wryly observes, "something that governments do to foreigners."<sup>60</sup> From the point of the view of the victim, rather than of the assailant, gunboat diplomacy is perceived as "something which foreign governments do to smaller countries." This is certainly the conclusion to be drawn from an

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Admiral E. F. Weggener, FGN, "The Theory of Naval Strategy in the Nuclear Age," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (May 1972): 206.

<sup>60</sup>Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy, 33.



objective review of the list offered above. Of the 52 incidents during the last decade which involved the use of U.S. naval force, only one of them (the attempted recovery of the remains and "black box" from the Korean airliner KAL-007) involved a confrontation at sea between the U.S. and an equivalent naval power, the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup> Every other case involved a use of force or attempted use of force by the United States against decidedly lesser states which are, as Bull notes, "the traditional victims of this kind of naval policy."<sup>62</sup> In 1980 he further observed that a consensus of smaller coastal states in the United Nations

"have already so altered the international legal rules relating to the use of force and magnified the costs of breaking them as to have precluded the older kind of 'gunboat diplomacy', which assumed a set of rules weighted in favour of the strong European powers and a division of the world into fully and partially sovereign states. They will be able to appeal to the prevailing Third World animus against interference by the rich industrial states of East and West. . . ."<sup>63</sup>

The best evidence that gunboat diplomacy is no longer accorded its earlier authority as a means of demonstrating political intent or military capabilities is the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention. This convention empowered coastal states with discretionary control over their territorial seas out to twelve nautical miles from their coastline, and economic control of their Exclusive Economic Zones out to 200 nautical miles. The provisions which set out these sea echelons were designed and enacted with the

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<sup>61</sup>See note 29.

<sup>62</sup>Bull, 9.

<sup>63</sup>Bull, 9.





assistance and approval of the United States, which in 1988, recognized them as binding under international law.<sup>64</sup> The significance of this regime is that, by precluding non-sanctioned maritime activity within twelve miles of a nation's coast, the Convention prevents the United States (or any other nation) from engaging in shows of naval force within visual sight from the coast--the very area where "gunboat diplomacy" would have its traditionally intended effect. One author has postulated that this development will serve as a form of arms control which will ultimately confine the world's navies to their own territorial waters and those of their allies, and thus substantially nullify the utility of naval forces for political purposes outside of outright combat.<sup>65</sup>

More to the point, however, is that this codification of territorial sovereignty seaward reinforces the notion that the coercive use of naval forces is a relic from an earlier and less sophisticated era--and that the United States recognizes it as such. In the modern world "gunboat diplomacy" has fallen into disrepute as a term for describing the use of naval forces to achieve political objectives, owing largely to its oxymoronic quality. Like the terms "military intelligence" and "military music," "gunboat diplomacy" implies self-contradiction. Diplomacy carried out at the point of a gun ceases to contain any element of civility, and is merely an act of coercion.

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<sup>64</sup>"United States: Presidential Proclamation on the Territorial Sea of the United States," 27 December 1988, 28 International Legal Materials 284. The fact that the United States and several other western industrialized nations later refused to ratify the LOSC was a result of disagreement over the provisions governing deep seabed mining, and not over provisions governing territorial rights.

<sup>65</sup>Elizabeth Young, "Military Implications of the Law of the Sea," Survival (November 1974): 267 (also cited in Bull, 11).



Coercive methods in diplomacy are generally controversial--all the more so when they are perceived to violate international law, challenge the sovereignty of other nations, or run contrary to accepted standards of international behavior. One study cites considerable differences of opinion regarding the legitimacy of coercive diplomacy even among analysts who share a general consensus about its effectiveness in certain situations.<sup>66</sup> Cable notes several reasons for the relevance of this perception. First, the idea of an international order, and a common concern for individual rights and the rights of national sovereignty have made intrusions into the territorial waters of another nation widely regarded as illicit. Furthermore, the use of violence by the regular armed forces of one nation against another is regarded--for better or worse--as less permissible than an even greater degree of violence by a tyrannical government or resistance movement within the sovereign borders of another nation.<sup>67</sup> In this regard, it is the perception, rather than the facts of a situation, which make a difference.

### **The Perceptual Foundation of Gunboat Diplomacy**

Perception and intent are the fundamental elements in the successful application of coercive diplomacy. This notion lies at the heart of Edward Luttwak's concept of "suasion," which is a particularly valuable way

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<sup>66</sup>Mandel, 63.

<sup>67</sup>Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy, 102. Witness also the current debate about the decision of the U.S. government not to use its available military forces to intercede in Iraq on the behalf of the Kurdish rebels,



of distinguishing between the relative political contents of the peacetime and wartime uses of naval force. Luttwak writes,

"In wartime, the political uses of sea power are naturally relegated to the background in the formulation of naval strategy, which concentrates on combat capabilities. . . . In the absence of general hostilities, however, a reverse priority applies, and . . . the focus of Great Power naval strategy has been shifting to missions that are "political" in the sense that their workings rely on the reactions of others, and these are reactions that naval deployments may evoke, but cannot directly induce."<sup>68</sup>

Luttwak's term "suasion" is appropriate to this political framework because it "usefully suggests the indirectness of any political application of naval force."<sup>69</sup> The critical distinction is that "armed suasion is manifest only in others' reactions," and operates "only through the filters of others' perceptions."<sup>70</sup> Any application of coercive naval force is based upon the aggressor's perceptions of the victim's vulnerabilities and vital interests, and, conversely, upon the victim's perceptions about the aggressor's intentions, capabilities and convictions.

The political liability inherent in the coercive use of naval force--whether the specific act is a transit through a coastal state's adjacent waters, the stationing of a carrier battlegroup outside a nation's largest port, or a naval exercise conducted within radar range of a hostile coast--is that its success is contingent upon the interpretation placed on that act by an

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<sup>68</sup>Edward N. Luttwak, The Political Uses of Sea Power (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) 1.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, 6.



independent second party--the victim--and the manner in which he chooses to respond. The "fundamental *sine qua non*" of suasion is the "cooperation" of the target, in correctly interpreting the aggressors intent, and in behaving predictably toward the desired outcome.<sup>71</sup> To a large degree, therefore, the political value reaped by an act of naval coercion is controlled by the victim and not by the aggressor. Thus, gunboat diplomacy is a form of signalling which is inherently unpredictable in its results.<sup>72</sup> If the victim perceives an alternative path of action which can achieve a political victory mitigating or counterbalancing any military cost the aggressor can impose, the victim may choose to react in a manner wholly unforeseen and unintended by the aggressor. For this reason, the successful use of coercive diplomacy is entirely dependent on an appreciation for the sensitivities of the intended victim, and on an accurate assessment of his options and his anticipated response.

This balance of perceptions and intentions is central to the "symbolic" value of naval forces. It is precisely what warships symbolize by way of a nation's commitment, its military capabilities, and its perceived interests, which gives naval presence political value far beyond the relative combat capability represented by a single ship, or even by a single naval task force. Since the period of British naval dominance, a warship has represented more than military capability alone. The sight of the Union Jack at the masthead historically meant that behind a British man-of-war stood not just a fleet, but an empire as well--the "portent of potentially overwhelming naval force."<sup>73</sup> As Luttwak observes:

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid, 57.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 30.





"the symbolic ship symbolizes national rather than naval power as such; its effectiveness is thus proportional to the former, not to the latter. Naval power is of course a constituent of national power but it need not be the salient source of national power. . . .<sup>74</sup>

In the contemporary world, however, the symbolic power of naval vessels has been shown to be a sometimes fragile thing, tempered by political considerations which weaken the deterrent or compellent value of gunboat diplomacy, and by the relative vulnerability of naval forces to the high-technology weapons available to nearly any state willing to commit its resources to acquiring sophisticated military hardware.

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid, 31.



#### IV. CONTEMPORARY LIMITS OF GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY

##### Recent Examples of Naval Intervention

"Perhaps the most difficult problem confronting any student of coercive diplomacy is to discriminate between success and failure in its results. Any judgment is bound to be subjective and to depend on the uncertain answers to such questions as: what was the purpose of the initiating government; was it substantially achieved; was success lasting or transitory; did it lead to war or other undesirable consequences; was the result worth the cost of coercion?"

--Sir James Cable<sup>75</sup>

Recent history has demonstrated the continuing relevance of naval intervention beyond the mere presence of warships as a demonstration of commitment or national resolve. The advantages which naval forces afford for diplomatic posturing and deterrence, crisis response, and military intervention have been catalogued by numerous scholars.<sup>76</sup> Attesting to this is

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<sup>75</sup>Diplomacy at Sea, 21.

<sup>76</sup>James Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 116; Kenneth Booth, Navies and Foreign Policy (New York: Holmes & Meier, Inc., 1979), 33; E. F. Gueritz, Norman Friedman, Clarence A. Robinson, and W. R. Van Cleave, eds., NATO's



the wide array of naval operations since 1980 which have exercised U.S. ability to project force in Third World crisis scenarios. This list includes:

- Forcible hostage rescue (Iran hostage rescue attempt, 1980).
- Evacuation of U. S. officials or foreign nationals from hostile situations in foreign territories (Evacuation of civilians from Grenada, 1983. More recently, from Monrovia Liberia, December 1991; and Mogadishu, Somalia, January 1992).
- Pre-emptive strikes against terrorists planning to commit violent acts, or retaliatory strikes following a terrorist attack (Libya, 1986)
- Support of law enforcement authorities in the forcible apprehension of known terrorists or other international fugitives (Achille Lauro Incident, 1985; arrest of Manuel Noriega, 1989).
- Armed escort to U. S.-flag merchant shipping in combat zones (Persian Gulf Tanker Escort Operation, 1987).
- Protection of U. S. property and U. S. embassies in foreign lands when local authorities prove inadequate or disinclined (Reinforcement of U. S. military forces to Panamanian bases, 1987-89).
- Interdiction of narcotics traffickers (Caribbean Anti-Narcotics Operations since 1982).
- Combat support operations against insurgents in host countries sponsored by the U. S. (El Salvador since 1982; assistance to Aquino government during 1989 Philippine coup attempt).





- Combat operations against violators of ceasefires during U. S. peacekeeping operations (Lebanon, 1983).
- Limited strikes or forced insertion of U. S. forces to protect U. S. security interests, or at the request of foreign governments (Grenada, 1983; and most recently, Saudia Arabia, 1991).<sup>77</sup>

Each of these incidents represents an example of the use of U.S. naval forces to protect national interests in low intensity conflicts which went well beyond a simple demonstration of capability or intent, to the actual use of force. The current naval strategy--with its emphasis on forward presence and crisis response--is designed to maximize U.S. capabilities for the use of force in just such circumstances. A strategy based on a realistic and demonstrated requirement for force projection capabilities offers the U.S. an historic opportunity to design its naval force and operations around real, rather than hypothesized, military missions.

And yet there are dangers inherent in such a strategy, as well. Despite the frequently belligerent rhetoric and massive military preparation which characterized the last forty-five years, the U.S. and Soviet militaries never engaged in combat. What was tested during the Cold War was not the combat capabilities of the superpowers, but the effectiveness of their conventional and nuclear deterrence strategies. The contribution of the U.S. Navy's Maritime Strategy to the deterrence of global war cannot be easily

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<sup>77</sup>List of LIC missions from Bernard F. McMahon, "Low-Intensity Conflict: The Pentagon's Foible,"ORBIS, 34 (Winter 1990) 2; with some modification. Obviously, this list addresses only the use or attempted use of naval power, without any considerations for the relative success or failure of the missions.



denied, given the obvious results, and the apparent recent withdrawal of the Soviet Navy from the race for maritime superiority.

The new naval strategy, on the other hand, will have the singular disadvantage of being constantly tested against real-world adversaries who are not constrained by fears of cataclysmic escalation. The continuing potential for regional crises in the emerging multi-polar world means the U.S. Navy is no less likely now than during the past decade of finding itself in close proximity to some Third World conflict. And as the preceding list demonstrates, the mixed results of U.S. naval interventions in the last decade leads one to conclude that the application of this new naval strategy deserves careful consideration.

The fundamental importance of perception to the success of naval diplomacy, as Luttwak described it, is not limited solely to the impact of perceptions on an adversary or a victim state. It is equally important for the continued support of the American public for U.S. overseas policy, and for their support for the Navy as an executor of that policy, as Huntington pointed out. Numerous highly memorable and well-publicized images of the last decade-- *USS Stark* heeled sharply to port, U.S. frigates following in the wake of the damaged *Bridgeton*, *USS New Jersey* shelling the Shouf Mountains overlooking Beirut, and the plasma displays in *USS Vincennes'* Combat Information Center--are evocative of a foreign and naval policy which were excessively vulnerable to politically embarrassing and tactically lethal miscalculations.

Given the volatility of the current geopolitical environment, the relevant issue for U.S. naval planning is not when or where naval force should be employed (which for the United States is predominantly a political



decision), but, rather, *how*. To this end, it is instructive to review some of the lessons of recent uses of U.S. naval force.

### **U.S. Intervention in Lebanon, March 1982 - March 1984**

Of the military interventions in recent years, U.S. involvement in Lebanon was the most unequivocally a failure. From the arrival of the first U.S. Marine forces on 17 March 1982, until their "redeployment" out of the area on 30 March 1984, the operation was an exercise in frustration, not only for the personnel involved in the U.S. peace-keeping force and their support elements afloat, but for the entire Reagan administration. The original objective to restore peace to the immediate region in order that a legitimate government could regain its equilibrium was a seemingly innocent objective, but for U.S. forces, there was no way to accomplish that goal without being viewed as an interloper and becoming pulled into the fighting. Eight years later, the effect of U.S. involvement on the immediate or long-term stability of that country has been indiscernible.

The U.S. intervention in Lebanon is also the most certain example of the inappropriate use of military force to achieve a political objective. That fact has been commented on by numerous analysts, and was the specific finding in the investigative report of the Commission investigating the bombing of Marine Headquarters in Beirut,<sup>78</sup> which noted:

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<sup>78</sup>Admiral Robert Long, USN, Report of the DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983. (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984). See also Michael D. Malone, William H. Wheeler and



"The commission concludes that U.S. decisions as regards Lebanon taken over the past fifteen months have been, to a large degree, characterized by an emphasis on military options and the expansion of the U.S. military role, notwithstanding the fact that the conditions upon which the security of the USMNF were based continued to deteriorate as progress toward a diplomatic solution slowed. . . . The Commission therefore concludes that there is an urgent need for reassessment of alternative means to achieve U.S. objectives in Lebanon and at the same time reduce the risk to the USMNF."<sup>79</sup>

The U.S. Marine and Navy forces were deployed to Lebanon as an element of a Multi-National Force (MNF) tasked with "peace-keeping" among the numerous warring factors in and around Lebanon. U.S. military presence and neutrality were seen by the U.S. Administration as essential to assisting the Lebanese government in restoring its control over the divided country. And it was the neutrality of U.S. forces--rather than their military capability, per se--which was the principle basis for establishing and maintaining U.S. authority as an impartial enforcer of the peace. Confusion about the nature of the U.S. military mission in Lebanon, as evidenced by the the various interpretations of "neutrality," "peace-keeping" and "presence," and how those terms came to impact the rules of engagement (ROE) at various levels of the operational chain of command, was a principal contributing factor to the ultimate disaster at the Marine Headquarters in Beirut.<sup>80</sup>

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Joseph W. Robben, "From Presence to American Intervention," Survival 28 (Sep/Oct 1986): 422.

<sup>79</sup>Long, 134.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, 38.





As the perception of U.S. neutrality began to erode, (the inevitable result of U.S. military actions taken to protect their own forces) the U.S. lost its mandate in the eyes of the belligerents as an neutral arbiter.<sup>81</sup> There were five separate responses taken by U.S. military forces in Lebanon which served to undermine the effectiveness of the USNMF: (1) the training of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) of the Gemayal government; (2) the use of naval gunfire, rather than U.S. Marine artillery, to silence gun emplacements endangering Marine Corps positions; (3) the use of F-14 aircraft for reconnaissance flights intended to locate artillery emplacements within Beirut; (4) support for the occupation of the Chouf mountains by the LAF and, consequently (5) the necessity to support the LAF through direct military action--notably, further naval gunfire and air interdiction against Druze and Shi'ite forces in the hills surrounding the town of Suq-Al-Gharb.<sup>82</sup>

Each of these instances represented a justifiable use of force in order to effectively enable the U.S. Marines on station in Lebanon to safely execute their mission. However, as the Long Commission report stated, "there was a fundamental conflict between the peace-keeping mission provided through the chain of command to the USMNF, and the increasingly active role that the United States was taking in support of the LAF."<sup>83</sup> In choosing to take those actions, there was insufficient consideration given to the manner in which each instance would be perceived and interpreted by the individual factions at war in Lebanon. Actions favorable to any

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<sup>81</sup>Admiral Long's report (p. 42) concluded that "the public statements of factional leaders confirmed that a portion of the Lebanese populace no longer considered the UNMNF neutral."

<sup>82</sup>Malone, et al, 423.

<sup>83</sup>Long, 55.



particular side of the conflict were certain to jeopardize the appearance of U.S. neutrality. Furthermore, any interdiction by an outside agent into what was essentially a civil war--particularly by a nation like the United States which, through its traditional support of Israel, would never be seen as a neutral party--could be guaranteed to arouse political enmities. Thus, the U.S. efforts, however well-intentioned, were virtually assured of failure.

As Malone points out, the specific use of naval gunfire and, later air reconnaissance and interdictions from the aircraft carrier *Eisenhower* was almost certainly viewed as an escalation of the conflict by a third party who possessed superior firepower.<sup>84</sup> The inability of the impressive American forces to deal effectively with the regional powers, or more fundamentally to deter their attacks on the garrisoned Marines, is a graphic illustration of the limitations of overwhelming force, when earlier actions--i.e. the declaration and strict maintenance of U.S. neutrality--had already bounded the potential for effective military response. As James Cable observed, "sometimes two policemen can do more than a carrier battlegroup."<sup>85</sup>

As much as U.S. commanders on scene and decision-makers within the U.S. Administration may have misjudged the effect of their military actions, there was corresponding tactical brilliance on the part of the opposition forces in choosing their means of neutralizing U.S. involvement. The successful terrorist attack on the U.S. Marine Headquarters in Beirut achieved utter tactical surprise, with negligible loss of life on the part of the terrorists (i.e. one highly-motivated truck driver). As compared to the sophisticated weapons of U.S. forces in the region, the terrorist weapon was

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<sup>84</sup>Malone, et al, 429.

<sup>85</sup>Cable, Diplomacy at Sea, 106.



inexpensive, simple, and totally effective. More significantly, it had a devastating effect upon the perceptions of the American people, thus accomplishing in one instance what U.S. forces in the region were unable to accomplish against the factions opposing the Gemayal government. Admiral Long noted,

"The use of terrorism to send a political or ideological message . . . depends on the nature and breadth of media coverage. The political message in the 23 October 1983 attack was one of opposition to the U.S. military presence in Lebanon. An attack of sufficient magnitude could rekindle political debate over U.S. participation in the MNF and possibly be the catalyst for a change of U.S. policy."<sup>86</sup>

In short, Lebanon was a situation which could not have been resolved by the use of American military force, in any fashion which professed to stand as mediation. The resultant "redeployment" of U.S. Marines and their ultimate departure from the area only served to illustrate the limitations of even extraordinary military power in situations which are not conducive to military solutions. James Cable observed,

"Every kind of coercive diplomacy has been attempted, by numerous governments, during the last fifteen years, in relation to the continuing crisis in the Lebanon, but the situation in that country has never crystallized long enough to warrant any judgment that a particular foreign government had either succeeded or failed in its purpose. The same consideration applies to the remarkable variety of methods."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Long, 123.

<sup>87</sup>Cable, Diplomacy at Sea, 22.





## U.S. Naval Operations off Libya, August 1981 - April 1986

Notwithstanding his skepticism regarding Lebanon, Cable also wrote, "If there is a worse mistake than believing coercive diplomacy to be a reliable expedient, it is to assume that it never works."<sup>88</sup> This is an appropriate summary of the U.S. use of naval and air power against Muamar Kadhaffi's government in Libya in 1986. In sharp contrast to the result of U.S. intervention in Lebanon, which achieved no discernible improvement in the stability of the region, the U.S. raid on Libya, resulted in an immediate cessation in Libya's overt involvement in world terrorism which has lasted to the present.<sup>89</sup>

The differences in the motivation, circumstances, planning and execution of U.S. actions against Libya could not stand in sharper contrast to the events and results arising from the use of force in Lebanon. Most striking--and perhaps most significant for the success of the mission--was that the U.S. actions against Libya were conceived to accomplish limited objectives, and were only attempted after all other available options had been exhausted. Nevertheless, the fact that the U.S. was ultimately required to use force provides a further lesson on the limits of naval intervention in certain circumstances.

Since the early 1970s, Libya had engaged in a series of acts which had demonstrated the state's support for international terrorism, and which

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>89</sup>Brian Breedham, "As the Tanks Rumble Away" The Economist, 1 September 1990, 6.



had been particularly nettling for the the United States. In October 1973, Libya declared that the Gulf of Sidra was Libyan territorial waters, in clear violation of international law. Tensions between the U.S. and Libya culminated in August 1981, with the downing of two Libyan SU-22 fighters by U.S. carrier-based F-14s during a freedom of navigation exercise in the Gulf of Sidra by two U.S. carrier battlegroups. (See Appendix 2).

Then in mid-1985 a further spate of terrorism inflamed relations between the two nations. Over a period of four months preceding the U.S. raid on Tripoli, from January until April, 1986, the United States made numerous attempts to deter Libya from its espoused involvement in terrorist activities. These measures included both quiet and postured diplomatic statements, the recall of all U.S. citizens from Libya, the freezing of Libyan assets in U.S. institutions, and extensive diplomatic efforts, in cooperation with European allies, aimed at isolating Libya socially and economically.<sup>90</sup> These efforts climaxed with a second freedom of navigation exercise by three U.S. carrier battlegroups in March 1986, during which U.S. aircraft sunk two Libyan patrol boats and destroyed Libyan shore-based missile radar sites, after the Libyans had fired two surface-to-air missiles.

From the political perspective, the objectives of U.S. naval actions against Libya up to that point constituted a controlled escalation of relations between the two states, which erupted into combat only when Libyan air forces challenged U.S. rights on the high seas. The purpose of U.S. freedom of navigation exercises was to demonstrate continued U.S. intentions to operate in an important Mediterranean exercise area, and to assure the Libyans that

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<sup>90</sup>Frederick Zilian, "The U. S. Raid on Libya and NATO." ORBIS 30 (Fall 1986):499.



the U.S. would not be deterred by rhetoric.<sup>91</sup> Significantly, all efforts up to that point, including the two fatal encounters between Libyan and U.S. aircraft, failed to deter Kadhaffi from anti-Western rhetoric and activities.

The final act, the bombing of the *La Belle* discotheque in West Berlin, was traced directly to Libyan operatives and prompted the U.S. to a coercive use of force against Libya in an effort to make an unequivocal statement about the price to be paid for further terrorism. The air strike on Libyan military targets in and around Tripoli on 14 April 1986, made that statement.

There were four elements of the use force which impacted directly on the accomplishment of the mission in this case: (1) the clarity of U.S. objectives; (2) strength of U.S. motivation over that of Libya; (3) useable military options; and (4) Libya's fear of unacceptable escalation.<sup>92</sup> As compared to its actions in Lebanon, U.S. intentions toward Libya were clear-cut and well communicated during the months preceding the actual use of force.

At the least, the U.S. desired to put an end to Libya's support for international terrorism. It was further desirable to make Kadhaffi's continued leadership of Libya untenable, either by emasculating his ability to influence regional events and undercutting his support by other Arab League rulers, or more preferably, by setting in motion a political turnover in Libya which would remove him from power. While the former goal was

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<sup>91</sup>W. Hays Parks, Colonel USMCR, "Crossing the Line." U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings (November 1986): 40

<sup>92</sup>Tim Zimmerman, "The American Bombing of Libya: A Success for Coercive Diplomacy?" Survival 29 (May/June 1987): 207. Zimmerman draws broadly on eight elements outlined in Alexander George's Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971). For purposes of this discussion regarding the specific use of naval force, four of those elements seem directly applicable.





an obviously legitimate one, recognized and supported by all the major U.S. allies, the second had been tainted by the Reagan administration's frequently inflammatory rhetoric and thus probably served to steel Kadhaffi's resolve and also to alienate some of the support that might other-wise have been forthcoming from the allies.<sup>93</sup>

There was ample incentive for the U.S. to use force against Libya to secure its aims. Above the realistic desire to eliminate a documented source of terrorism worldwide, the U.S. was motivated to maintain its credibility with the more moderate Arab governments, and also to bolster its leadership against terrorism in the eyes of its European neighbors who had seen the greatest number of terrorist acts committed on their soil. Measured against the motivation of the Libyans to continue along their belligerent path, the ultimate use of force can retrospectively be demonstrated to have been the action which conclusively shifted the balance of determination in favor of the United States.

Here it is again significant that the molding of Libya's actions was directly related to Kadhaffi's perceptions of U.S. willingness to resort to ultimate means in order to impose its will. The earlier uses of U.S. naval force during freedom of navigation exercises were insufficient to make this point, even though they repeatedly demonstrated the vulnerability of Libyan defenses against clearly superior U.S. forces and technology. All attempts leading up to the actual strike on Libya did not provide a strong enough deterrent effect, due to a lack of U.S. credibility. The perception of the Libyans up to that point was that the U.S. lacked the will, if not the means, to take the steps necessary to enforce their words. The key issue for

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<sup>93</sup>Zimmerman, 208.





the American administration was in finding the correct method and objective to demonstrate its motivation and to test the limits of Kadhaffi's.

From the military perspective, the single most important aspect of the use of force was that there were useable military options available to demonstrate U.S. will and capabilities. This means not only that the correlation of forces favored the U.S., but that there were justifiable military targets whose elimination would contribute to the overall U.S. objectives. The Libyan air defense sites which had been used to target and control Libyan aircraft in strikes against U.S. carriers, and the known training camps and military headquarters from which Libya exported terrorist groups, were targets with obvious tactical value, even if no other goal was achieved than their destruction. Moreover, the use of force as a last resort, rather than the first or concurrent resort, as in the case of Lebanon, made the U.S. cause more justifiable in both domestic and allied eyes.

Finally, the threat of unacceptable escalation, made implicit by the U.S.'s gradual escalation of the level of conflict, demonstrated U.S. resolve and capability, while leaving an option available for the modification of Libyan behavior. In discussing the use of "armed suasion" in peacetime, Luttwak notes that one of the critical elements in the effective use of force is that its application be limited. As long as the purpose and context of the use of force remains "political," that is, intended to evoke suasion rather than to destroy enemy forces or values,

"the political use of symbolic forces does require that the target state recognize its symbolic nature, i.e., that the damage inflicted has been *deliberately* minimized. This in turn requires the deploying state to discriminate successfully



between what is and what is not symbolic in terms of others' perceptions, which may be quite different from its own."<sup>94</sup>

Zimmerman cites an equivalent observation of Thomas Schelling that, "it is not the pain and damage itself but its influence on someone's behavior that matters. It is the expectation of more violence that gets the wanted behavior, if the power to hurt can get it at all."<sup>95</sup>

While the effect of the U.S. bombing raid on Kadhaffi's headquarters and military infrastructure has had the demonstrably successful result of curbing Libyan terrorism (and terrorism worldwide, to some degree), it was unsuccessful in achieving the ulterior motive of hastening Kadhaffi's overthrow. This has been attributed, among other things, to the fact that the Libyan military was so discredited and demoralized at their inability to defend against or to get off even a single response to the U.S. strike, that there was inadequate popular support for the initiation of a coup by the otherwise wholly disaffected military leadership.<sup>96</sup>

U.S. actions had the further effect of solidifying allied support for anti-terrorist operations, even if public claims of support from allied governments were muted or nonexistent. The most significant example of this was that the French--whose government had refused overflight rights for the British-based USAF FB-111s, thus more than doubling the round-trip distance required for the strike--supported the U.S. raid by a 70% majority.<sup>97</sup> The fact that the U.S. was required to take a unilateral action in

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<sup>94</sup>Luttwak, 8.

<sup>95</sup>Thomas Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 82; cited in Zimmerman 214, note 40.

<sup>96</sup>Edward Schumacher, "The U. S. and Libya." Foreign Affairs 65 (Winter 1986-7): 327.

<sup>97</sup>Zilian, 517.



this case, despite the vested interest of the NATO countries in ending imported terrorism, was more an indication of the diversity of European domestic politics, and the continuing sensitivity of NATO to any flexing of military might which could have intimidated the Soviets and thus upset the slowly improving East-West relations.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, the U.S. military actions, and the demonstration of resolve (and military competence) which it exhibited had the effect of galvanizing the European nations into taking a notably less tolerant stand toward terrorism in general, and toward renegade nations like Libya, specifically.

### **U.S. Naval Operations in the Persian Gulf, 1987-1988**

Compared to the relative clarity with which the results of naval intervention in Lebanon and Libya may be analyzed, U.S. naval operations in the Persian Gulf during the latter days of the Iran-Iraq War are much more problematic. Considered in the aggregate, the evaluation of U.S. actions in the Persian Gulf exemplifies the difficulty in weighing deterrence against the costs of deterrence. The relatively heavy price paid by the U.S., and in particular by the U.S. Navy, in terms of lives lost (both military and civilian), vessels damaged, tactical and public relations mistakes made, and national and institutional prestige lost, cannot be easily balanced against the speculative value of even greater war-time damages prevented by the presence of U.S. naval forces in the region. Nevertheless, there is a real case

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 523.





to be made that U.S. actions could not have been easily avoided without long-term, and largely unforeseeable repercussion for later U.S. foreign policy.

Initially it must be admitted that the actions taken in the Persian Gulf--which almost exclusively involved the use of U.S. naval forces--were not the result of a coherent policy decision or the pursuit of an identifiable goal, as in the case of the Libyan air strike, or even (to a somewhat lesser degree) in the case of the stationing of the Multi-National Force in Lebanon. U.S. decisions in the Persian Gulf, beginning with the U.S. escort of Kuwaiti tankers, were incremental responses to the heightening conditions of the Iran-Iraq War, rather than an earlier policy executed in the face of an ongoing war.<sup>99</sup> The U.S. had no stated interest in the outcome of the War, except to prevent it from impacting on other peripheral interests. Indeed, the U.S. had no formal ties to either Iran or Iraq, and only informal preference for Iraq by virtue of U.S. antipathy toward Iran, remaining from the earlier Iran-Hostage Crisis.<sup>100</sup> U.S. actions throughout can best be described, using President Reagan's term, as "proportionate responses" to the escalating events brought on by the Iran-Iraq War.

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<sup>99</sup>On this particular point analysts are uniformly in agreement. See in particular Janice Gross Stein, "The U. S. in the Gulf: The Wrong Strategy in the Right Place," International Security, 13 (Winter 88/89): 143; and Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the West: Strategic relations and Military Realities (London: Westview Press, 1988): 351-443.

<sup>100</sup>Donald E. Neuchterlein, "Changing Perceptions of U.S. National Interests in the South Atlantic and Middle East," in James Brown and William P. Snyder, eds. The Regionalization of Warfare: The Falkland/Malvinas Islands, Lebanon, and the Iran-Iraq Conflict. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1985), 214.



On the broad scale, U.S. interests in the Gulf were two-fold, based on the intention to prevent the Soviet Union from extending its influence into the Persian Gulf region, and to ensure the safe flow of oil as a strategic commodity for Western societies.<sup>101</sup> Preoccupation with countering Soviet influence grew out of the need to ensure that stability problems in the area were not further complicated by Soviet attempts to broaden their influence, and also by the desire to restrain the Soviet Union's historic attempt to attain access to a warm-water port. Ensuring the continued flow of oil was important for its own sake--particularly in retrospect of the 1973 OPEC embargo--but also as a means for the United States to support the vitality of the European and Japanese economies as strategic underpinnings for the free-world economy.

The problems which arose from attempting to devise and execute an operational military mission around so vague a set of principles, illustrates the difficulty in translating an objective into an operable strategy. Thus, as the Iran-Iraq war widened to endanger commercial shipping and oil production facilities in the region, the U.S. responded by expanding its Middle East Force, in order to protect shipping, signify ongoing U.S. interests, contain the expansion of the war and the potential for an Iranian victory and a further spread of Moslem fundamentalism, and ensure that the Soviets did not gain advantage through a broadening of their influence. This was the

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<sup>101</sup>Gary Sick, "The United States and the Persian Gulf," in The Gulf War: Regional and International Dimensions Hans W. Maull and Otto Pick, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 121; and Donald E. Neuchterlein, "U. S. National Interests in the Middle East: Is the Persian Gulf a 'Bridge too Far?'" Naval War College Review, (Winter 1989): 114.



catalyst for the U.S. acceptance of the Kuwaiti offer to reflag and escort their tankers.

The numerous incidents which arose during the period of U.S. intercession in the Gulf War--the successful Iraqi attack on *USS Stark*, the mining of the supertanker *Bridgeton*, the sinking of an Iraqi minelayer and recovery of its mines, the mining of *USS Samuel B. Roberts* and the ensuing destruction of half of Iran's major warships, the U.S. shelling of Iranian oil platforms, and the destruction of *IranAir* Flight 655 by *USS Vincennes*, to name the most significant--have been examined by political analysts, technicians, naval officers and government officials. Specific failures have been attributed to equipment design flaws, tactical and human errors by those on scene, miscalculations on the part of the U.S. commanders, ambiguities in the rules of engagement, underestimates of the assets and determination of the Iranian and Iraqi belligerents, and a general lack of cultural and strategic understanding on the part of the U.S. administration.

Considered only over the period of time during which U.S. forces were actually employed in the war zone, positive results are difficult to find among the series of errors. Indeed, U.S. efforts in the Persian Gulf have been characterized by Janice G. Stein as a failure on the strategic level because they failed on the tactical level:

"The commitment of American naval forces to escort Kuwaiti tankers through the Gulf and the progressive broadening of their mission in the midst of an ongoing war was the wrong strategy in the right place. . . . It was poorly conceived because its targets were unclear and its scope ambiguous; *it was ineffective because it did not achieve its stated goal of deterring attacks against shipping in the Gulf*, and it was dangerous because it provoked the actions it was





designed to deter and risked entrapping the United States in a process of uncontrolled escalation."<sup>102</sup>

The more reasonable and balanced assessment offered by Anthony Cordesman is perhaps a truer reflection of the ambiguities of the situation in which U.S. naval forces operated :

"It is clear that the U.S. in some ways blundered into the Gulf, and that the West will now have to stay in the Gulf until it can collectively blunder out of it. What is far from clear, however, is that the U.S. really had any choice other than to attempt to "muddle through". The U.S. unquestionably could have done many things better, but history is not kind in providing unambiguous needs for action. If history is painful to those who act too quickly, it can be devastating to those who act too slowly. This is particularly true of the defense of long-term strategic interests where the assertion of a strong and continuing regional presence is essential to success."<sup>103</sup>

Realistically, perhaps the worst that can be said is that the U.S. decision to interpose its naval forces in the center of a war zone, between two notoriously vindictive adversaries, demonstrates how little U.S. policy-makers had learned by the failure of U.S. efforts in Lebanon, only five years earlier--and during the same U.S. administration. Indeed, the similarities between the two interventions are striking: the U.S. decides to take the leadership in what is hoped will be an international coalition, due to broad and ill-defined strategic goals which are not of vital interest to the United States, and chooses to exert its influence via military means due to a lack of

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<sup>102</sup>Stein, 142 (*italics mine*).

<sup>103</sup>Cordesman, 441.





diplomatic or political leverage in any other sphere. The results are likewise similar: the belligerents view U.S. presence as an intervention by a superior military force which hinders their prosecution of an independent struggle, both powers successfully exploit U.S. stated "neutrality" by attacking it along the margins of its rules of engagement; U.S. forces incrementally escalate the struggle and come into danger of being trapped by their stated policies; the situation is finally concluded only by the catalytic effect of an extraordinary tragedy in which hundreds of innocent lives are lost.

Ultimately, one of the most significant lessons to come out of the Persian Gulf operations should have been the most obvious: that naval operations are inherently risky, and are even more so in a war zone. To this can be added the well-documented ambiguities resulting from uncertain political objectives, which translated to uncertainty in the rules of engagement, and in their implementation. The evidence rising from the series of otherwise "unrelated incidents" leads to the conclusion that the overall mission was of questionable success, largely because the strategy was too ill-defined to provide a proper gauge for the measurement of its success.

On the other hand, what can be said about U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf is that it demonstrated unequivocally that the United States was willing to go substantial distances, and pay an operational and political price which no other nation could have borne, in order to make good on its claims of the strategic value of the Persian Gulf and its interest in regional stability. The benefits of this sort of diplomatic constancy have only become apparent within the last six months.



## V. CONCLUSIONS

"In many cases, naval demonstrations have made it possible to achieve political goals, without resorting to an armed struggle merely by exerting pressure through one's own potential power and by threatening to initiate military hostilities. Thus the navy has always been an instrument of state policy, and an important support for diplomacy in peacetime. This is fostered by the very nature of a navy and the properties inherent in it, namely a constant high degree of combat readiness, mobility, and the ability to concentrate one's own forces in selected areas of the ocean in a short time. "

-- Admiral of the Soviet Fleet, Sergei G. Gorshkov<sup>104</sup>

It has been shown that the evolution in the U.S. National Security Strategy during the last two years has established forward presence and crisis intervention in regional conflicts as the prevailing missions for United States naval forces in the future. These missions are likely to continue for the foreseeable future, not only because of the predictable reduction in U.S. overseas bases, but because regional instabilities which could endanger U.S. interests are virtually certain to continue.

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<sup>104</sup>S.G. Goshkov, Sea Power of the State (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1976), cited in Uri Raanan, Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and Geoffrey Kemp, eds. Power Projection: Perspectives, Perceptions and Problems (Hamden: Archon Books, 1982), 26.



As a result of its military victory in Operation DESERT SHIELD, the United States now stands in an extraordinary position with respect to its military and political relations in the Third World. In effect, the United States was able to capitalize on an opportunity which was not afforded by any previous use of force against a regional power: it was able to demonstrate what can be lost when a lesser power attempts to challenge a major power in the purely military plane where the actions of the two contestants are completely unfettered by ancillary political considerations. The obvious conclusion, more than any action in recent memory, is likely to buy the U.S. conventional deterrence against regional adversaries for years to come--if the capital is wisely invested.

### **Lessons of Operation DESERT SHIELD**

Inasmuch as the most recent use of U.S. military power, Operation DESERT SHIELD, is not yet concluded, only the most obvious of its lessons can be offered at this point. Nevertheless, some of those lessons have a direct bearing on the issue at hand: i.e., what the recent uses of U.S. naval force can provide as guidelines for the current naval strategy. The first of those lessons is what DESERT SHIELD demonstrates about the value of U.S. naval operations in the Persian Gulf three years ago.

One of the criticisms offered by Janice Stein is that the United States





"put the cart before the horse: rather than deterrence dictating the need for credibility and resolve, it was concern with reputation, credibility, and resolve that dictated the extension of deterrence. Once American forces were deployed, officials defended their continued presence not by the intrinsic interests at stake but largely in terms of the damage to American credibility that would ensue from their withdrawal.<sup>105</sup>

While this undoubtedly seemed like a valid criticism at the time, and drove to the heart of U.S. impetuosity in thrusting itself into the Persian Gulf War, hindsight has demonstrated that the reputation of the United States, and its perceived reliability as an ally, was the foundation of the successful coalition operations in DESERT SHIELD.

The U.S. has maintained a naval presence in the Persian Gulf since 1948. Often that presence had been the only official U.S. representation in the region. The consistency of purpose demonstrated, and the numerous military and diplomatic contacts gained during that period (to say nothing of the bonds created through the more recent military assistance programs) was a significant contributor to the perception on the part of Arab states that the United States had a genuine interest in the security of the region and was consistent in its approach to preserving that stability. This perception could only have been reinforced by the persistence exhibited by U.S. naval forces (and the U.S. government) during the Iran-Iraq War, when the U.S. suffered numerous politically embarrassing and costly losses to its own forces. While the Reagan Administration's reliance on "proportionate responses", such as the shelling of evacuated Iranian oil rigs, received great

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<sup>105</sup>Stein, 157.



criticism among some circles in the U.S., the demonstration of U.S. restraint may have further served to enforce the view of moderate Arab nations that the U.S. was acting in as balanced a manner as circumstances would allow.

The strength of moderate Arab perceptions became evident with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The request of the Saudi government for U.S. assistance, their offer of basing and staging rights--as well as the fuel for U.S. aircraft and vehicles--and the strength of the Coalition both diplomatically and operationally, can all be directly attributed to the long-standing relations between the United States and the Gulf states. This was based in no small degree on the presence of U.S. naval forces in the Gulf since shortly after the Second World War.

On the other hand, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is an equally valid demonstration of the limits of naval presence. In spite of the conspicuous earlier support of the Kuwaiti government represented by the reflagging and escorting operation, that experience, and the continued U.S. presence of the Navy's Middle East Force, were insufficient to deter Iraq from its aggression. Indeed, this same lesson can also be seen in the fact that the Libyans failed to be deterred in 1986 by the presence of a superior U.S. naval force operating in their "territorial waters". Clearly there are limits to what can be accomplished by naval presence when a foreign power accredits the U.S. with a lack of political will.

Current claims by the Navy and the U.S. government that its rapid response deterred the further invasion of Iraqi forces into Saudi Arabia may be correct. However, that claim cannot be made without the corresponding acknowledgement that an established, historic naval presence failed to prevent the Iraqi invasion, as it had earlier failed to prevent Libyan terrorism or the expansion of the Iran-Iraq War. In this regard, Janice



Stein's observations about the limits of extended deterrence are decidedly accurate.

A further lesson of the most recent conflict is that the US public is unlikely to support future military operations which cannot be shown to be grounded in American values, winnable in the short term, and inexpensive in lives and monetary cost. The most dramatic lessons of DESERT STORM--the effectiveness of U.S. weapons systems, and the ability of U.S. forces to wage a conflict with minimal casualties or collateral damage--will prove to be a determining factor in future U.S. military commitments. It is highly unlikely that the American public or the Congress will tolerate the sort of losses incurred or the tactical errors made during the earlier Persian Gulf operation without obvious, demonstrable advances in reconciling or ending the conflict. Similarly, once the U.S. has arrived at a decision to resort to force, the increasing lethality of combat environments will make it essential for U.S. forces to achieve the decisive superiority necessary for quick victory with minimal casualties.

This could have a significant consequences for future naval operations and on the professional credibility of the Navy as an institution, particularly in the event that the U.S. naval forces are tasked to operate in the sort of political and military quagmire which characterized the Lebanon and Persian Gulf operations. Under the new "crisis response strategy", the Army and Air Force would be only rarely forward deployed--particularly as U.S. overseas bases begin to decline--and therefore would rarely enter theater of operations before a crisis demanded intervention through combat. The Navy, on the other hand, will continue to serve as the forward deployed military representative of the U.S. government. That will subject it to





exactly the sort of unpredictable and increasingly dangerous threats typified by the missiles, patrol boats, mines and terrorists of the Persian Gulf and Mediterranean. Dealing with such threats will demand that the U.S. Navy pay increasing attention to the requirements of low-intensity conflict and to the imaginative use of limited military resources which has characterized Third World adversaries. In this regard, U.S. military failures in Lebanon and in the Persian Gulf are instructive.

The distinctive similarity about all four examples cited--Lebanon, Libya, the Persian Gulf and Operation DESERT STORM--is that in each case the United States was met with a progressively more credible and lethal opposing force, characterized by the incorporation of some of the world's most capable weapons systems, and where not--notably in Lebanon and with the use of mines by Iran--by an imaginative and surprisingly effective use of cruder weapons. The lesson for future military operations is that the proliferation of technologically advanced weapons and knowledge of jpw to employ them effectively has blurred the distinction between the "Third World" or regional power and a global power to the point where there is no longer a militarily significant difference. Thus the overwhelming use of force brought to bear in the U.S. strikes on Libya and Iraq is not just a political expedient to maximize the brevity of the combat, it is essential to eliminate an adversary's means of defense and reprisal. Future military operations in any environment should be planned around the immediate use of the maximum firepower available, once combat is initiated.

Perhaps the most significant of the lessons of DESERT SHIELD is what it was not. As successful as the operation was, it would be imprudent





for U.S. planners and officials to consider it a paradigm for the resolution of future regional conflicts. It is highly unlikely that future conflicts would occur in a region where the U.S. could count on the friendly support of adjacent nations; where U.S. forces would have virtually unrestricted use of runways, pier facilities, staging areas, and a modern transportation infrastructure; where there would be a satisfactory period of training and preparation, and relatively flawless intelligence; and where the seaborne transport of logistics supplies and combat equipment would go unchallenged by enemy air or submarine forces.

But there is a more fundamental issue than the use of DESERT SHIELD as a model for future combat operations--that is the necessity for the United States to retain the capability to mobilize forces in a region to demonstrate national will, to control the escalation of a crisis, and, most importantly, to deter combat whenever possible. That requires the full range of options inherent in the new National Security Strategy under the category of "crisis response"--as opposed to the emphasis of the strategy of a year ago simply on "force projection."

Crisis response, as it was introduced by President Bush in Aspen, Colorado, implies the ability to respond in any manner appropriate and available to compel or deter an adversary from an undesirable course of action. A sufficient response in some cases may be merely the threat of actual imposition of economic or diplomatic sanctions, or the posturing of a credible military force in the region to demonstrate to an adversary the futility of military action. All of these options were attempted in the case of Libya in 1986, and in the case of Iraq in 1990. In both cases, those actions proved inadequate to deter further aggression, and overwhelming U.S. force



was thus required to resolve the crisis. The point is that all options were exhausted before the U.S. resorted to force.

Continued success in both diplomatic and military endeavors is contingent on U.S. capability to do more than simply impose punishment on its adversaries in the form of surgical military strikes. At the same time, the continued protection of U.S. interests in areas of the world which cannot support a sophisticated combat presence--or its logistic train--for even a relatively short duration dictates that the U.S. maintain a capability to operate in remote regions, independent of its national support structure.

For both reasons the U.S. must continue to rely on its naval forces--as it has over the last forty-five years--to demonstrate U.S. commitment to global and regional stability when those conditions exist, and to demonstrate U.S. intentions and capabilities as a prelude to actual combat--when regional stability is threatened. The important consideration for naval planning in the future will be to ensure that the inherent dangers and limitations of the use of naval force are recognized at the outset, and that "gunboat diplomacy" remains a last resort rather than the expedient of choice.



## APPENDIX 1

### CHRONOLOGY OF U. S. INTERVENTION IN BEIRUT 17 MARCH 82 - 30 MARCH 84

(Source: Foreign Affairs Spring 1982, 1983, 1984 and Report of the DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, Oct. 23, 1983.)

- 1982 17 Mar U. S. sends 670 soldiers to join 11-nation peacekeeping force which is to follow Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai on 25 Apr.
- 6 Jun Israeli forces invade Lebanese territory and reach the outskirts of Beirut within three days.
- 9 Jun Israeli Air Forces launch massive, successful attack against Syrian SAM sites in Bekaa valley.
- 23 Jun 32d U. S. Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) deploys off Lebanon.
- 24 Jun U. S. Embassy in Beirut closes. U. S. citizens are evacuated from the port city of Juniyah by 32d MAU.
- 26 Jun U. S. vetoes UNSC resolution demanding limited Israeli and Palestinian withdrawal from west Beirut.
- 16 Jul U. S. suspends the sale of cluster artillery shells to Israel.
- 1 Aug Truce collapses as Israeli forces mount fierce bombardment of Beirut. U. S. Ambassador Habib negotiates a cease-fire.
- 12 Aug UNSC unanimously adopts resolution demanding that Israel permit UN officers to monitor cease-fire violations in Beirut.
- 25 Aug First U. S. Marine peacekeeping forces land in Beirut.
- 14 Sep Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayal is assassinated.
- 18 Sep Reports emerge that hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in Shabra and Shatilla refugee camps by Lebanese Christian militiamen allowed into the area by Israeli authorities.
- 20 Sep Lebanon requests U. S., France and Italy return peacekeeping forces to Beirut which had been removed on 10 Sep.
- 29 Sep 32d MAU lands at Port of Beirut as part of multinational force.
- 1 Nov President Reagan expands U. S. peacekeeping duties to include patrols of East Beirut, and doubles the size of U. S. force.
- 21 Dec U. S. Marine Mobile Training Teams begin training Lebanese Army Forces in rapid-reaction tactics.
- 1983 18 Jan UNSC extends term of UN multinational forces for six months.
- 25 Jan Israel orders its troops in Lebanon to avoid contact with US peacekeeping forces in order to alleviate growing frictions.
- 2 Feb U. S. Marine draws his pistol in effort to force withdrawal of 3 Israeli tanks from U. S. guard post.





- 8 Feb Israeli commission releases report recommending dismissal or censure for role of Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Sharon, in massacres at Shabra and Shatilla refugee camps.
- 15 Feb Lebanese army takes complete control of Beirut for first time in 8 years as Christian militias withdraw.
- 18 Apr Terrorist bomb damages U. S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63, including 17 Americans.
- 4 May Secy of State Schultz successfully negotiates an agreement for withdrawal of Israeli troops.
- 20 May U. S. lifts ban on sale of 75 F-16 fighters to Israel imposed after Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982.
- 23 Jul Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party announces formation of a Syrian-backed "National Salvation Front" to oppose the 17 May Israeli-Lebanese agreement.
- 28 Aug U. S. Marines return fire for the first time against a mortar attack originating from Druze positions.
- 29 Aug Two U. S. Marines are killed and 14 wounded as Lebanese Army clashes with Muslim Militiamen.
- 1 Sep President Reagan orders 2000-man Marine reinforcement unit into Mediterranean to stand by off Beirut.
- 3 Sep Israel withdraws forces from Shouf Mountains; positions are later taken up by Druze militiamen.
- 7 Sep U. S. carrier-based F-14s conduct first photo-reconnaissance flights to identify opposing force locations.
- 8 Sep U. S. naval guns fire on Druze positions to protect U. S. forces.
- 13 Sep U. S. authorizes Marine peacekeeping forces to call in naval gunfire and air strikes to protect their positions.
- 17 Sep U. S. naval guns fire for first time on targets in Syrian-held Lebanon; Syria warns it will return any fire on its positions.
- 19 Sep U. S. destroyers shell Druze positions in hills above Beirut; White House defends move as "vital to safety" of U. S. peacekeeping force; France criticizes the U. S. action.
- 20 Sep Congress authorizes extending U. S. Marines in Lebanon, averting a confrontation with President over 1973 War Powers Act.
- 22 Sep French combat planes attack anti-government positions east of Beirut in retaliation for shelling of French headquarters.
- 19 Oct Four U. S. Marines are wounded when convoy of U. S. peacekeeping force is attacked by remotely-detonated car bomb.
- 23 Oct 241 U. S. Marines and Navy personnel are killed in suicide truck-bomb attack against barracks of U. S. peacekeeping forces in Beirut; near-simultaneous attack against French compound leaves 58 killed.
- 4 Nov Third truck-bomb attack destroys Israeli headquarters in



Tyre, Lebanon, killing 60 persons. Israelis retaliate by striking Palestinian positions in mountains east of Beirut.

17 Nov French warplanes attack bases of pro-Iranian guerrillas in eastern Lebanon in retaliation for attack on French barracks.

24 Nov Israel exchanges 4500 captured Palestinian and Lebanese guerillas for 6 Israeli soldiers held by PLO.

4 Dec U. S. carrier-based combat planes attack Syrian positions in Lebanon in response to Syrian attacks on unarmed U. S. reconnaissance aircraft on 3 Dec. Eight Marines are killed by artillery fire from Syrian-backed militiamen near Beirut.

19 Dec House Armed Services Committee panel charges Marine commanders with "serious errors" which permitted successful terrorist attack against Marine headquarters.

28 Dec DoD Commission reports that serious security and intelligence errors permitted terrorist attack on Marine Headquarters in Beirut. Commission recommends a reassessment of U. S. military role and diplomatic options in Lebanon.

1984 3 Jan Pentagon acknowledges that up to 700 troops of the 1600-man U. S. peacekeeping force in Beirut are routinely transferred to naval vessels offshore for safety at night.

7 Jan 2 U. S. Marines are wounded by artillery fire near Beirut airport. U. S. Marine corporal is killed by ambush the next day.

30 Jan Shelling of U. S. outpost in Beirut kills one Marine, wounds 3.

7 Feb President Reagan orders redeployment of U. S. peacekeeping forces to ships off Lebanese coast, and authorizes air, naval strikes against militia positions near Beirut.

8 Feb Battleship New Jersey fires 250 16-inch shells against pro-Syrian militia positions near Beirut.

UK withdraws its peacekeeping forces from Beirut.

13 Feb U. S. ships evacuate Lebanese Army units stranded by Druze offensive south of Lebanon.

15 Feb White House announces plan for withdrawal of U. S. peacekeeping forces from Beirut by 15 March.

21 Feb U. S. forces begin redeployment to ships offshore; withdrawal completed by 26 Feb.

14 Mar King Hussein of Jordan denounces U. S. policy for pro-Israeli bias, and rejects peace negotiations with Israel.

24 Mar France announces decision to withdraw peacekeeping troops from Beirut; completed 31 Mar.

30 Mar U. S. warships leave Beirut coast, ending U. S. participation in peacekeeping mission.



## APPENDIX 2

### CHRONOLOGY OF U. S. NAVAL OPERATIONS IN GULF OF SIDRA, LIBYA AUGUST 1981-APRIL 1986

(Source: Foreign Affairs Spring 1980-87; U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings May 1987; Col. W. H. Hays, USMC, "Crossing the Line," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, November 1986.)

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- |      |     |   |
|------|-----|---|
| 1973 | Oct | Kadhaffi declares Gulf of Sidra south of 32-30 North to be Libyan territorial waters.   |
| 1974 | Feb | U.S. State Department declares Libyan proclamation to be a violation of international law.  |
| 1979 | Dec | U.S. Embassy in Tripoli is sacked by mob while Libyan security forces look on. Kadhaffi ignores U.S. protest.   |
| 1980 | Jul | President Reagan, in speech before the American Bar Assn., denounces Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba and Nicaragua as "outlaw states" who sponsor worldwide terrorism.   |
|      | Sep | 2 Libyan Mig-23s make an unsuccessful attack on USAF RC-135 on reconnaissance mission north of 32-30N.  |
| 1981 | Aug | U.S. State Department receives intelligence that Libyan agents in U.S. are actively pinpointing locations of U.S. govt officials.   |
|      | Aug | U.S. Battlegroup consisting of <i>USS Forestall</i> and <i>USS Nimitz</i> commences Freedom of Navigation exercise in op-area extending south of 32-30N. During four-day exercise two Libyan SU-22s are downed by U.S. F-14s. |
| 1982 | Mar | U.S. imposes embargo on Libyan oil products and curtails sales of high-technology equipment to Libya.   |
| 1984 | Apr | London policeman is killed by terrorist firing from third floor of Libyan Peoples' Bureau. Great Britain closes the embassy and severs diplomatic relations with Libya.   |
|      | Jul | 18 ships strike mines in Red Sea apparently laid by Libyan cargo ferry <i>Ghat</i> .  |
| 1985 | Jun | TWA Flight enroute Beirut is hijacked by terrorists who kill USN Petty Officer. 39 Americans are held aboard after other passengers are released.   |
|      | Jul | U.S. expels attache of Libyan mission to U.N. after FBI data links him to plot to assassinate Libyan dissidents in U.S.   |
|      | Oct | PLO terrorists board <i>Achille Lauro</i> and kill one U.S. citizen.  |





- Supervision in planning the attack is traced to Libya.
- 1985    Nov    EgyptAir Flight enroute Cairo is diverted to Malta by terrorists who kill 2 Israelis and 3 Americans.
- Dec    Abu Nidal terrorists, using passports confiscated from Moroccan laborers in Libya, kill 20 civilians in Rome and Vienna airports. Libya grants safe haven to Nidal.

#### EVENTS PRECEDING THE U.S. USE OF FORCE

- 1986    7 Jan    Via Executive Order, President Reagan orders all U.S. citizens to leave Libya, and declares "appropriate penalties upon return to the U.S." for those choosing to ignore the order. Ban on all U.S. trade with Libya is announced.
- 8 Jan    U.S. State Dept. issues report to allies detailing Libyan links to terrorist incidents and training. U.S. freezes Libyan assets in U.S., estimated at \$2.5 billion.
- 9 Jan    Italy bans arms sales to Libya.  
Canada cancels transfers of drilling technology to Libya.
- 20 Jan    Asst Secy of State John Whitehead is dispatched to present U.S. position to heads of state of Britain, GDR, Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands.
- 28 Jan    EEC members agree to ban arms sales to countries "clearly implicated in supporting terrorism."
- 20 Mar    Kadhaffi hosts convention of 258 extremist political groups.
- 23 Mar    U.S. commences Freedom of Navigation exercise which includes incursions into Libyan "territorial waters" south of 32-30, by 127 ships of three carrier battlegroups.
- 24 Mar    Libya unsuccessfully launches two SA-5 missiles at F-14s, followed by two more SA-5s and one SA-2 later that day. Libyan actions are declared hostile by CVBG commander. U.S. aircraft then sink a Libyan PBM and neutralize Surt SAM radar installation.
- 25 Mar    Nanuchka PBM is attacked and damaged by two A-6Es after displaying hostile intent.
- 27 Mar    After 75 hours of unimpeded operations, exercise is terminated and all U.S. warships depart.
- 3 Apr    Bomb explodes on TWA flight enroute Athens from Rome, killing 4 Americans. Kadhaffi congratulates the terrorists.
- 5 Apr    Bomb explodes in LaBelle discotheque in Berlin, killing 2 and injuring 230. U.S. intelligence later intercepts Libyan telephone calls confirming that Libyan forces had planned and executed the bombing. Information is passed by U.S. to British and West German governments who characterize





the information as "compelling "

- 7 Apr Egyptian govt rejects and publicly reveals U.S. overtures to join forces in joint attack on Libya, deliberations for which had been in progress for previous eight months.
- 8 Apr Bomb explodes aboard TWA flight from Rome to Athens. Four Americans aboard are killed.
- 10 Apr President Reagan decides to proceed with strike against Kadhaffi's terrorist training camps and military support organization. Planning for a military strike against selected Libyan targets begins in earnest at JCS, NSA.
- 12 Apr UN Ambassador Vernon Walters is dispatched to London, Bonn, Paris and Rome to solicit joint support for further, more stringent sanctions against Libya. Only the Thatcher government responds favorably.
- 14 Apr EEC in emergency session approves sanctions against Libya including forced reduction in embassy personnel and tighter visa restrictions against Libyan diplomatic corps.

#### CHRONOLOGY OF U.S. AIR STRIKE AGAINST TRIPOLI (based on Eastern Standard time)

- 14 Apr 1200 President Reagan approves the strike mission against five selected Libyan military targets.
- 1213 28 KC-10s and KC-135s take off from RAF Mildenhall for refuelling rendezvous points in Atlantic and Mediterranean.
- 1236 24 F-111s take off from RAF Lakenheath;  
5 F-111s take off from RAF Upper Heyford.
- 1600 VPres. Bush meets with State, Defense, NSA, DCI, and CJCS. Selected Senate and House leaders are briefed on the mission; there are no dissenting voices.
- 1745 *USS America* commences launching 6 A-6Es and 6 F/A-18s. *USS Coral Sea* launches 8 A-6Es and 6 F/A-18s. Additional aircraft include KA-6s, E-2Cs, and EA-6Bs. Strike control is provided to F-111s from E-2C controlled by *USS Ticonderoga*.
- 1900-1912 Combined Strike force attacks the following targets:  
(0200 local)
  - Benghazi Military Barracks and MiG assembly warehouse.
  - Benina Airfield (suppression of M9G-23 air defenses).
  - Aziziyah Military Barracks (Tripoli central command for Libyan terrorist activities.
  - Sidi Bilal Terrorist Training Camp in Tripoli.
  - Tripoli Military Airfield
- 1953 *America* and *Coral Sea* recover all aircraft.
- 0310 USAF aircraft return to home bases in Great Britain.



### APPENDIX 3

#### CHRONOLOGY OF U. S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE PERSIAN GULF 1987-1988

(Source: Foreign Affairs, Spring 1987, 1988 and U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1988, 1989)

- 1987 23 Mar US offers to extend military protection to Kuwaiti vessels transiting through international waters in the Persian Gulf against attack by Iran-Iraq war combatants.
- 6 Apr Kuwait proposes transferring the registration of Kuwaiti oil tankers to American flag so US military vessels can protect them in the Persian Gulf. Kuwaitis also seek to transfer some tankers to Soviet registry.
- 14 Apr USSR announces it will lease 3 tankers to Kuwait to transport oil through Persian Gulf, and raises possibility that Soviet warships may escort the tankers.
- 7 May Soviet freighter *Ivan Korotoyev* suffers minor damage in attack by Iranian patrol boats in Persian Gulf near Dubai.
- 17 May *USS Stark* is struck by 2 Exocet missiles fired by an Iraqi F-1 Mirage fighter in the Persian Gulf near Bahrain, killing 37 crewmen.
- 18 May President Reagan puts American military vessels in the region on heightened state of alert; Iraqi President Hussein admits Iraqi planes are responsible and apologizes.
- 19 May Reagan Administration announces "general agreement" with Kuwait to reflag 11 Kuwaiti oil tankers so they can be escorted by US Navy vessels in Gulf.
- 21 May Senate votes 91-5 to require detailed security report from the Administration before reflagging begins. Reflagging is delayed until late June or July.
- 28 May *The Washington Post* reports that the USSR has dispatched 3 minesweepers to the Persian Gulf to join 2 Soviet frigates on patrol there since 1986.
- 20 Jul UN Security Council unanimously approves Resolution 598, calling for a cease-fire in Iran-Iraq war. Iraq declares its reaction "positive"; Iran calls it a "vicious American diplomatic maneuver." USSR and China refuse to support proposed arms embargo against violators of the resolution.



- 22 Jul Three US warships escort 2 reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers into Persian Gulf in first test of reflagging program.
- 24 Jul Tanker *Bridgeton* hits a mine while under US escort, causing slight damage.
- 28 Jul US Defense Secretary Weinberger orders minesweeping helicopters into the Gulf. US later asks FRG, UK, France, Belgium and Netherlands governments to send minesweeping gear
- 4-7 Aug Iran holds naval maneuvers in Iranian territorial waters and wartime "exclusion zone" in Gulf, allegedly training crews in suicide missions using speedboats loaded with explosives.
- 8 Aug US Navy F-14 fires 2 missiles at an Iranian fighter which had displayed "hostile intent." Both missiles miss the target.
- 12 Aug UK and France agree to send minesweepers to the Persian Gulf, but stipulate that they will lend assistance only to their own shipping.
- 4 Sep Surface to surface missile strikes SW coast to Kuwait, damaging houses and industrial facility. Kuwait accuses Iran of launching missile and expels 7 Iranian diplomats.
- 11 Sep UN SecGen J.P. de Cuellar arrives in Tehran on peace-seeking mission; Iran agrees to cease-fire only if UN identifies Iraq as the aggressor; Iraq agrees if Iran drops its demand.
- 15 Sep Italy, Belgium send minesweepers to Gulf. By mid-October largest international fleet assembled since Korean war is in Gulf, including vessels from US, USSR, UK, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.
- 21 Sep US helicopter attacks Iranian amphibious vessel allegedly laying mines in international waters, killing 5 crewmen and wounding 4. US warships rescue 26 Iranian crewmen the next day and discover 10 mines on the disabled vessel.
- 8 Oct US helicopters attack 4 Iranian patrol boats in the Gulf after they fire on a US surveillance helicopter. One Iranian boat is sunk, two are disabled and seized. 2 crewmen are killed.
- 16 Oct Iranian Silkworm missile strikes US-flagged tanker in Kuwaiti waters, injuring 18 crewmen.
- 19 Oct US destroyers shell Iranian offshore oil rig reputed to be a gunboat base.
- 21 Oct US Senate passes resolution calling on President Reagan to report to Congress within 30 days on his Gulf policy.
- 26 Oct President Reagan bans by executive order all imports from Iran and expands list of militarily significant items banned from export to Iran.







- 2 Nov US warship mistakenly fires on unarmed Arab fishing boat mistaking it at night for Iranian gunboat. One Indian crewman is killed. US expresses regret for the incident.
- 8 Nov Emergency Arab League summit passes resolution condemns Iran's continuation of war and expressing support for Iraq.
- 1988 30 Mar Iranian gunboats fire on a Kuwaiti military base on Bubiyan island in first known clash between Iranian and Kuwaiti armed forces.
- 14 Apr 14 crewmen are injured when *USS Samuel B. Roberts* strikes a mine in Persian Gulf near Bahrain. US Navy later locates and destroys 2 mines similar to type known to have been used by Iranian forces.
- 18 Apr US warships shell 2 Iranian oil platforms used as radar stations. Later that day US naval forces sink or disable six Iranian ships which had earlier attacked American vessels.
- 26 Apr Saudi Arabia severs diplomatic relations with Iran to protest 1987 riot by Iranian pilgrims in Mecca and continuing Iranian harrassment of Gulf shipping.
- 3 Jul While engaged in surface skirmish against Iranian gunboats, cruiser *USS Vincennes* mistakes Iranian commercial Airbus for attacking F-14, and downs it with two missiles, killing estimated 290 persons aboard.
- 11 Jul US offers to pay compensation to families of victims of Iran Air 655.
- 18 Jul In letter to UN SecGen, President Khavanei of Iran accepts UN Security Council Resolution 598 calling for immediate cease-fire between Iran and Iraq, and withdrawal to internationally recognized borders.
- 20 Jul UN Security Council unanimously adopts resolution expressing "deep distress" over shooting of civilian aircraft.
- 8 Aug UN SecGen de Cuellar announces that Iran and Iraq have accepted UN peace proposal.
- 20 Aug Cease-fire between Iran and Iraq official begins, ending the war.



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